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CHRISTIANITY IN THE REPUBLIC,

BRIEFLY CONSIDERED IN

SEVEN SERMONS,

PREACHED IN

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, PITTSBURGH, PA.,

DURING THE WINTER AND SPRING OF 1854–5,

BY

EDWIN M. VAN DEUSEN, A. M.,

RECTOR.

PITTSBURGH:

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CORRESPONDENCE.

PITTSBURGH, Sept. 6th, 1855.

Rev. E. M. VAN DEUSEN.

Dear Sir: Having listened with much interest to the course of monthly sermons delivered by you during the last winter and spring, and being desirous to give them a more permanent form, and the important truths they set forth, a more extended hearing, we respectfully request a copy for publication.

Very truly,

Your friends and parishioners,

WILLIAM F. JOHNSTON,	N. P. SAWYER,
J. W. PAUL,	C. W. ROBB,
CHAS. A. COLTON,	THOS. B. GRAHAM,
GEO. E. ARNOLD,	JAS. B. MURRAY,
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WILSON MILLER,	H. J. LYNCH,
JAMES A. HUTCHISON,	J. H. SEWELL,
D. H. WILLIAMS,	A. BURKE.

PITTSBURGH, Oct. 8th, 1855.

HON. W. F. JOHNSTON, AND OTHERS.

Gentlemen: My reply to your kind note has been delayed, not for want of a right appreciation of your request, and

the motives which prompted it; but because of absence from the city, and also that there might be time for the deliberation which its importance demanded.

With no strong conviction that the sermons will present any great attractions, except what may arise from the importance of the facts, principles and truths they present for consideration, I yield to your too partial judgment, and herewith furnish you a copy for publication.

Very truly and faithfully,
Your friend and Rector,
EDWIN M. VAN DEUSEN.

TO

THE CONGREGATION

WORSHIPING IN ST. PETER'S CHURCH,

WHOSE KINDNESS, FORBEARANCE AND INDULGENCE ARE HERE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED:

These Sermons,

PREPARED FOR THEIR INSTRUCTION,

ARE NOW HUMBLY, BUT HOPEFULLY, INSCRIBED

BY

THEIR DEVOTED FRIEND AND RECTOR.

"It is no less useful than curious, in reading history, to mark the different dispositions, manners, and characters of nations, and their rulers; since these are the instruments, working under the direction of Providence for the accomplishment of its designs, without any infringement of man's free will. If you behold a nation distinguished by irreligion and contempt of things sacred; by licentiousness, faction, luxury, dissipation, and effeminacy; be assured that without a reformation, and a return to first principles, the conquest of that nation by some other, is becoming more and more feasible every day; the same vices which provoke divine vengeance, preparing the way for its execution. Such were the characteristics of the ancient people of God in the times preceding their several captivities. Such was the case when the old Assyrian empire perished with Sardanapalus; when Babylon was surprised by Cyrus; when Darius was overthrown by Alexander; when Greece fell under the dominion of the Romans; when these last were overwhelmed by the northern nations; and when Constantinople was taken by the Turks. Every man who has the prosperity of his country at heart, should very seriously consider, how far these *tokens* are to be found upon ourselves; what can be done to prevent the farther spreading of the infection, and to eradicate the seeds of the disorder."—*Works of the* Rt. Rev. GEORGE HORNE, D. D., *Bishop of Norwich*, 1790, *Vol.* 2, *p.* 344.

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INTRODUCTORY.

The preparation and delivery of the following course of Sermons was occasioned by the fact, that as St. Peter's church has a night service only on the evening of the first Sunday in each month, it was thought that it furnished a very suitable opportunity for the presentation of a variety of topics of great and general interest, which do not ordinarily find a place in the parochial instruction of the Lord's day. There had been so many startling events, and there was so much in the present condition of the country, to arouse and alarm all devout Christians, and lovers of the nation's true welfare; that a binding obligation was felt to make the pulpit speak forth the language of admonition and warning. It is not pretended that anything new or original is presented; but the discourses were prepared more in the way of suggestion, to awaken attention, promote inquiry, and lead to the study and examination of the important subjects they contain; rather than to discuss them fully, or make a thorough treatise upon any one or more, that passed under review. The facts are but a fraction of the volume, or even volumes that are at hand, and ready for the use of any one who is disposed to enter upon further investigation.

It will be observed that the examination of *the truth* of the doctrines of any religious body has been carefully avoided; and that the attention is confined to the practical working of the *modes* or *systems* adopted for the accomplishment of a vastly important object—*the dissemination of morality and religion throughout the nation.*

The Sermons are now published in compliance with an earnest desire, expressed in private at the time of their delivery, by

parishioners, and others; and more recently embodied in a communication, which will be found on another page; and, also, that erroneous inferences and impressions, in regard to their real character, and teaching, might be removed, by careful reading and examination. While the author is very far from depreciating any good done by others, and does earnestly rejoice in its accomplishment; it is the bounden duty of all to abandon that which is inefficient, follow always "the more excellent way" of divine prescription, and seek to promote "that* agreement in the faith and knowledge of God," and to attain to "that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life."

Requesting the indulgence of the reader for their defects, and his careful consideration of their truths, principles and facts; the author submits these Sermons to all who desire to take pleasure in being recognized as a part of the Republic, and to feel honored in bearing the appellation of American Citizens.

* Exhortation in the Form and Manner of Ordering Priests.

SERMON I.

MUTUAL DEPENDENCE.

EPHESIANS iv: 25.—"For we are members one of another."

There are laws of our being, and our association in the varied relations of life, out of which spring some of our weighty obligations; and upon the observance of which, depends much of our true welfare and happiness. They are primary and fundamental; and if generally recognized, and carefully followed, need no frequent comments, nor labored expositions; but when forgotten, or imperfectly obeyed, or deprived of their due influence over the minds of men; it becomes necessary to go back to these first principles—endeavor to establish and enforce them, with all the sanctions of reason, justice and authority—and protect them from future encroachment and neglect, by all those barriers and safeguards, which their sacredness and importance should prompt us to secure. There are certain laws which govern the continuous and graceful flowings of the majestic and fertilizing stream, of which we seldom take thought or notice, so long as they are left undisturbed; but when the accumulating rubbish fills up the channel, or the embankments are overflowed, or broken down; then those obstructions must be removed—those barriers restored, and more effi-

cient defences erected—before those laws can again be supreme, and confine those waters in one continuous current, to enrich the soil, and beautify the landscape. There are certain laws which enter into the formation, and govern the preservation, of the healthful atmosphere; but they seldom become our study, or even arrest our attention, till we find there is derangement—some corrupt element has been introduced, and living men are falling before the power of the withering and deadly agent. Then we must exert all our wisdom and skill to discover the secret enemy, and use every effort to remove the cause of the afflicting mortality, and restore the due influence of those laws which preserve a pure and healthful atmosphere. Such a first truth, and fundamental law of our being, and association in the varied relations of life, is set forth in the words of the text: "For we are members one of another." They exhibit our mutual dependence—teach that we are bound together, and intimately united: and if this connection were generally remembered, there would be a performance of the duties which grow out of it; and no necessity for setting forth its claims, nor the arguments upon which they rest. But there is a selfishness, and love of individual independence, which would dissolve this connection; and make all labor, learning, and care, centre in separate, personal happiness and aggrandizement. They dry up sympathy for others' misfortunes, and have no expression of joy for others' prosperity—in business transactions, justify all deception and intrigue—in times of danger, bestow no thought upon others' safety—with a multitude of lives exposed, are concerned only for the preservation of one—with poverty, ignorance and suffering abroad, are indifferent if there are comfort, quiet and

knowledge at home—with vice, profligacy and crime in the alley, the court, and other low haunts, are without fear, if they intrude not upon their precincts, nor disturb their possessions. In such a condition of things, it becomes the duty of every one to examine first truths and fundamental laws; and thus check the current of evils, which must otherwise overflow and lay waste: and we must purify that atmosphere which has been poisoned and deranged, because the principles of its healthful preservation have been set aside. To oppose the influence of individual independence, and a simple regard for *self* in all we feel, think, say and do, we must analyze those inspired words of the Apostle, and learn our true duty from the divine oracles—"for we are members one of another."

We find these words true when we contemplate our *common origin*. No distance of time—no change of feature, or custom, or condition—no relapse into the depths of ignorance or barbarism, can break the chain which binds the whole human family, as descendants from the first two of the same kind, and unites them in one common race. The very name given to our first parent exhibits this truth. "And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living."* So, when the great Apostle stood before the haughty Athenians to reveal "the unknown God" whom they "ignorantly worshiped," and to "preach the unsearchable riches of Christ," he told them plainly that God "had made of *one blood* all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth;"† as the Athenians boasted that they were the *aborigines* of their country,

*Gen. iii: 20. †Acts xvii: 23, 26.

and in no way related to any other people. Indeed, the whole system of revealed religion—the varied, divine dispensations—the incarnation, life and death of our blessed Lord—and the instructions of His Apostles; have reference to the common origin and nature of the whole human family. Must there not also be a common membership and relationship? When Christ atoned for a guilt incurred in Paradise, and provided a way of escape from its penalty; did He not proceed upon the assumption that "we are members one of another," intimately connected; and that the lapse of some four thousand years had not changed or impaired this relationship? When He gave His final commission to His Apostles, did He not tell them to "go into all the *world*, and preach the Gospel to *every creature?*"* In all His acts and instructions, this close bond of union is recognized; and with its severance must be associated the destruction of His authority, and the dissolution of His church. What though the scattered members of this race never meet; and unmeasured distance intervenes between their respective dwelling places—the bond of connection is unaffected—this depends upon a common origin. The most distant leaf or tendril of the far-stretching vine, presents evidence of relationship to that which springs nearest the root, because having a common beginning. The opposite branches of the loftiest and most wide-spreading tree, are always exhibiting like features, because proceeding from one source. If *he would*, therefore, man cannot destroy his connection with his fellow man; and though he may advance in knowledge and wisdom—achieve wonders by his genius—and be elevated to the

*Mark xvi: 15.

very pinnacle of earthly glory, he cannot deny his origin, nor disown his race. "For we are members one of another."

But this is true in a more restricted sense. There are the ties of consanguinity, and the family union, which bind different members in varying numbers, and thus establish a closer and more intimate fellowship. What attachments are thus formed—indeed this union has its beginning in the tenderest emotions of the heart—what offices of kindness and affection spring out of it—how cheerfully does each bear the other's burdens—how jealous of each other's character—if one member suffer, all suffer with him. Honor and success achieved by one, are reflected upon, and enjoyed in a degree by all; while the misfortune and sorrow visited upon one, cast their shadow over all. If a parent disown, or maltreat his children; a wife desert or calumniate her husband, or a husband his wife; if a child neglect, or distress a parent, or children turn against each other; how soon the *world even*, will see such departures from holy duty, and denounce the guilty ones as destitute of common humanity; because they encroach upon their sacred bond of union, and do violence to those better feelings, which should be cherished for their near kindred in the flesh. When the divine compassion is to be set forth, the most forcible illustration is taken from the parental relation. The Psalmist says, "Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him."* Malachi speaks of the Lord in the last day, "sparing his children, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."† Our Saviour exhibits the Father's

*Ps. ciii: 13. †Mal. iii: 17.

willingness to give to them that ask him, by the earthly parent's conduct to his children. "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him."* When the same Saviour would picture our heavenly Father yearning over his sinning offspring, and rejoicing over their safe return; does he not tell us the parable of the prodigal son "going into a far country,"—"wasting his substance with riotous living," "coming to himself" in his low estate, returning home, "seen a great way off," embraced affectionately, and restored, amid feasting and rejoicing; while to the complaining son it is said: "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, and was lost, and is found."† And when the wise man would represent the faithfulness of our Lord, he says "there is a friend who sticketh closer than a brother."‡ Thus we have the most restricted, but most intimate, of those relationships in which "we are members one of another."

This is true *socially*. It is not only "not good that man should be alone,"|| but by his very nature, he is made to crave society and converse. The human heart is full of gifts for *other hearts;* and each must unburden itself, and bestow upon others, that it may have room to receive, and strength to carry what others bring, in the way of exchange and remuneration. Hence the friendships and associations of life—the circles and societies

*Matt. vii: 9, 10, 11. †Luke xv: 11–32.
‡Prov. xviii: 24. ||Gen. ii: 18.

of acquaintances and neighbors—mutual attentions and kindnesses—the interchange of favors and services—the general sorrows and sympathies in the midst of calamity and distress; the reciprocation of congratulations and rejoicings, when success brings its abundant reward, and prosperity more than supplies every want. These circles and combinations of the equal, congenial and similar—these classes of the educated and ignorant, high and low, rich and poor, linked together by common affections, tastes, and pursuits, are again united in the large and populous community, town or city; and still are subject to the same mutual dependence and obligation. They recognize the authority of one common system of law, have a variety of common interests; motives to co-operate in the use of the same means of protection, against the assassin, the burglar, and all other perpetrators and abettors of vice and crime; as well as against the beginnings of the destructive conflagration—"the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day."* In all those avocations and employments, adopted as means of maintenance, and to call forth human industry, skill and genius; how closely they are bound together; and how mutually dependent, for the varied objects of their labors. When prosperity is vouchsafed to one branch of enterprise and effort, how all others feel the impetus, and partake in the advantages and resources it supplies. But if depression and calamity overshadow one, how soon they encroach upon the remainder; and all are made to feel their intimate relationship and dependence. Class may combine against class—the educated and ignorant,

*Ps. xci: 6.

the employed and the employer, the rich and the poor, respectively, may band against each other; but how soon they agree upon terms of reconciliation; when they begin to find that they are all living for each other; and that the true happiness and prosperity of each, are best promoted, when the other knows no want, and is blessed with cheerfulness and abundance. How truly, therefore, it has been said—

"Man thou hast a social spirit, and art deeply indebted to thy kind,
Therefore claim not all thy rights; but yield, for thine own advantage.
Society is a chain of obligations, and its links must support each other;
The branch cannot but wither, that is cut from the parent vine.
Wouldst thou be a dweller in the woods, and cast away the cords that bind thee,
Seeking, in thy bitterness or pride, to be exiled from thy fellows?
Behold the beasts shall hunt thee, weak, naked, houseless outcast.
Disease and death shall track thee out, as bloodhounds, in the wilderness:
Better to be vilest of the vile, in the hated company of men,
Than to live a solitary wretch, dreading and wanting all things;
Better to be chained to thy labor, in the dusky thoroughfares of life,
Than to reign monarch of Sloth, in lonesome, savage freedom."*

The text is true *ecclesiastically*, or as we are members of the one *church* or *body* of Christ. In this sense it was primarily used to the Ephesians, in order to enforce the importance of always adhering to the truth. Certain heathen philosophers had thought it lawful to be guilty of falsehood under peculiar circum-

* Proverbial Philosophy. Subjection.

stances. *Menander had taught—"a lie is better than a hurtful truth." Proctus, that "good is better than truth." Darius, in Herodotus, "when a lie will profit let it be used." Plato, "he may lie who knows how to do it in a fit season." Maximus Tyrius, "there is nothing decorous in truth, but when it is profitable; yea, sometimes truth hurts, and a lie profits men." The apostle, knowing the strictness of Christ's morality, and that the practice of such principles would dissolve society, says to his Ephesian converts, "wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another."† So likewise to the Romans the same apostle says:—"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."‡ And to show the beauty and importance of Christian unity, and guard them against the great sin of schism, St. Paul takes the human body again as an illustration, and, in 1 Cor. 12, enters upon a most conclusive argument, which places the principle of the text beyond the reach of contradiction. He says, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body"—"and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." "God hath tempered the body together," "that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members

* See Whitby, *in loco*. †Eph. iv: 25. ‡Rom. xii: 4, 5.

rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Here then we have the highest, fullest and most refined sense in which the words of the text are true—a union set forth, the most sacred, important, and exalted; which, though illustrated and imperfectly represented by material, visible things, because of our present feeble capacities, yet far transcends them; and in the same degree, that spirit is better than matter, and the soul is better than the body, in which it is temporarily tabernacled, and made to dwell. Because, to form this most intimate fellowship, and establish this closest union, the mighty power of the Holy Ghost arouses, and draws man's whole world of passions, emotions and energies; and imbues them with his own grace: by an outward ordinance of Christ's own appointment, binds them together in a visible body, and renews them in the spirit of their minds; for, says the apostle, "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, and are made to drink into one Spirit;"* they embrace one common "faith once delivered to the saints;"† they partake of the same table; and "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless,"‡ they are "henceforth no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, they grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."‖ They

*1 Cor. xii: 13. †Jude 3.
‡Luke i: 6. ‖Eph. iv: 14–16.

are bound together in a common inheritance of the glad tidings of the Gospel—in common prayers and praises—joys and sorrows—exultations and misgivings—confessions and forgivenesses—humiliations and hallelujahs; so that they are ever realizing the comforting declaration of the Apostle to the Christians in Galatia: "ye are all one in Christ Jesus,"* and experiencing the truth of that comprehensive article of the Christian faith, "the communion of saints:"† and at that solemn hour "when the silver cord is about to be loosed, the golden bowl broken, and the pitcher to be broken at the fountain;"‡ when all other ties are to be separated, and unions dissolved; they feel that this cannot be affected: but that whether "strangers and pilgrims on the earth,"‖ and children of change, care and sorrow; or partaking of the rest of the paradise of God; they are still members one of another," "knit together in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of Christ our Lord;"§ death interposing only a veil between the seen and the unseen; and opening clearer views of that eternal world, to those who have now "fought the good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith."¶ What though the Christian shall unite with them no more in any earthly relation or condition; in the struggles, conquests, or vicissitudes of this life; what though as the wife, the husband, the father, the child, the companion and friend; each shall be known to the other as *such*, no more forever; and *he* must work out his day of probation without the comfort of their presence, the aid of their counsel, the odor of their piety,

* Gal. iii: 28.
† Apostles' Creed.
‡ Eccl. xii: 6.
‖ Heb. xi: 13.
§ Collect for All-Saints' Day.
¶ 2 Tim. iv: 7.

and the instruction of their example; yet *he* is still bound to them; is "one with them in Christ Jesus:" and whilst *he* follows his Saviour, neither the calamities of earth, nor time, nor change, "nor death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalites, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate him from"* *them* in that spirit world, which is so mysterious to contemplate; but which it will be so blissful and rapturous, to enter, understand, and enjoy.

In a more extended sense, the text is true *politically*. "We are members one of another," in a vast and growing nation; and we cannot fail to have our proportionate share in her success and triumph, or her crimes and misfortunes. United under one system of government, and contributing to its support—generally, speaking a common language—having common interests, and occupying a continuous territory—we cannot fail to recognize the strong bond which unites us together as one people. Insult offered to any public functionary is made a national concern—invasion of the most remote portion of the land calls forth the indignation and resistance of the whole people; and as a *unit* they act, when the honor and character of the nation are called in question. With an enterprising spirit abroad—the whole land veined with channels of communication—knowledge widely diffused, and intelligence everywhere in ceaseless circulation; we become a vast family with common interests—closely bound together, and ready to travel with the current; without considering the character of

† Rom. viii: 38–39.

the company, with whom we are journeying, or the haven towards which we are hastening. Habit, taste, custom, opinion and sentiment, are contagious; and therefore every people have common features and peculiarities, which distinguish them from others; and give them a similarity and individuality, which help to the formation of a uniform character, and a general standard of excellence or faithlessness. If *we would*, we cannot remain isolated, and unconnected with the mass: if there is an element of corruption or prosperity—of virtue or vice—of happiness or misery—success or ruin—we must, as individuals, feel its influence and power; and, as it spreads, must rejoice in the extension of the one, or be made depressed, and anxious, by the prevalence of the other. It therefore becomes the duty of all, from time to time, to consider the state and prospects of the country; and to be ever on their guard, lest the path of national virtue be forsaken, and the true "foundations" of national integrity and greatness "be out of course."* Such a period seems now at hand, when the pulpit should not keep silent; but loudly sound the note of warning, and call all true lovers of our country, its morality and religion, to rise in their might; and, learning our true position as a people, stand manfully forth, to stem the current of evil, and maintain uprightness, fidelity, and truth. Merely political measures and principles, should not be brought forward; but we should thoroughly study and analyze opinions, sentiments, practices, and principles which, when permitted to prevail, reach our altars and firesides, and spread universal desolation and ruin—

*Ps. lxxxii: 5.

which scatter temporal disappointment and misery; and banish from the land that light, knowledge, and truth that are essentially necessary to man's eternal welfare and happiness. It is, therefore, proposed, by Divine permission, on the evening of the first Sunday in each month, during the coming winter and spring, to discourse upon the *dangers* and *hopes* of the Republic—the forms of faith, and their efficiency, prevalent in the country; and the claims of that religion which seems best calculated to promote a *national religious* character, and save souls for time and eternity. Every man has a great question to answer for himself; and he cannot escape the responsibility of its consideration. What a broad field of inquiry is presented between Christianity and Infidelity; and between the exaltation of the mother of our Lord to an absolute control over her Divine Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ; and the other extreme idea, which finds its advocates in a rapidly-growing Territory on our extreme West, that domestic purity is no longer to be preserved: and we must either permit this vast domain to be entirely possessed by the growth of the most deadly errors, that have ever deluded the human family, according as men are moved by superstition or licentiousness: or else we must rise in our majesty, and taking the Bible, history, reason, experience and observation as our guides, establish the truth of God and its better ways, by such marks, testimony, and incontrovertible reasoning; that no one shall be led away, from want of knowledge of the will of God and the path of duty. The question may arise, "what are we among so many?"—but this will not excuse us from *doing what we can;* and if we are doing God's work, we may feel with the

prophet when he heard, "Not by might nor by power, but my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."* "The Lord of hosts will be with us; the God of Jacob will be our refuge." One impelling motive to effort, is the principle of the text, "we are members one of another;" and to enforce these words, and exhibit their great importance, I have endeavored to show you in how many senses they are true. Let men cut themselves off from all these relations *if they can*. And *if they could*, what would they have left? Whence spring our comforts, joys, and truest happiness, but from our homes, the sacred precincts of friendship, the gains of our honest occupations, the bosom of the Church, the treasures of the Gospel, and the mighty nation; which is but an aggregate of many private homes and households? Where were the need of the affections, if we will bind ourselves to no one, whose excellence and goodness can call them forth? How secure the means of comfort and life, if we will unite with no others in earth's varied avocations? How gain the Divine reconciliation, peace of mind, comfort in adversity, triumph in death, and bliss in eternity, if we refuse to enter the communion and fellowship of Christ and his apostles, where these are promised, pledged, and given to all those who are "faithful unto death?" How protect ourselves against the encroachments of the thief, the debauchee, the inebriate, the murderer, and every other debased perpetrator of crime; and preserve for our own advantage the fruits of our industry and labor; if we will recognize no *civil authority*, nor become united with others, under one government for mutual protection

*Zech. iv: 6.

and happiness? These are all *essential*, *divine* relations; and each must labor to keep them pure and uncontaminated, to serve the ends for which they were designed; or lose his portion of this life's blessings, and gain no final admission "to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven."*

* Heb. xii: 23.

SERMON II.

NATIONAL DANGERS.

ROMANS xi: 20.—"Be not high minded, but fear."

There is, in every man, a great natural proclivity to exultation and boastfulness. Favor, promotion, success and prosperity, are sure to develop them, and make them conspicuous, and sometimes offensive. To stand upon some lofty elevation, and look down on those beneath us—to be conscious of the possession of privileges and blessings, of which others are deprived—and to be exalted to stations from which others have been removed, is not in the least disagreeable to our feelings, and generally leads us to "think of ourselves quite as highly as we ought to think;"* while we forget that we are neither perfect nor infallible—that we may commit the same errors that made others give place to us—that we hold our privileges and blessings by no certain tenure; and that a feeling of exultation and great self-confidence, is too often the precursor of disappointment and calamity; as the apostle said, "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."† This is the feeling against which the Roman converts were cautioned in the words of the

*Rom. xii: 3. †1 Cor. x: 12.

text. The ancient people of God had, on account of their unbelief, been deprived of those privileges and blessings, which, for so long a period they had enjoyed; and displaced from their lofty elevation as His chosen and peculiar nation, because they had rejected the Messiah—despised His word, and inflicted the ignominious death of the cross: while the Gentiles, among whom were these Romans, were receiving Christ, embracing His gospel, and obeying His word; and were thus securing that favor, and being promoted to that elevation, which the Jewish nation had forfeited and lost. This change the apostle represents by the cutting off the natural branches of an olive tree, and grafting others in their place, and says "if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree, were graffed in among them," "boast not against the branches," "because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." As if he had said, there is in thee a corrupt nature—thou art surrounded by innumerable dangers—there are always motives and reasons to impel thee to turn back—*one nation* has already fallen through unbelief, why shouldst thou boast thyself over *them?* why be *high-minded*, when thou hast so much reason to *fear?* What though thou hast secured the favor of Jehovah, and from being "a stranger and foreigner, thou hast become a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God?"* What though thou hast been raised from thy guilt and degradation, honored with the free pardon of the great Judge and Law-giver, and "blessed with all spiritual

*Eph. ii: 19.

blessings in heavenly places in Christ;"* yet thou must not *boast*, but rather *fear;* because thou art still subject to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,"† because "the flesh lusteth against the spirit," and "these are contrary the one to the other,"‡ so that thou art ever in danger, and must not "rejoice in thy boasting, for all such rejoicing is evil." ||

The words of the text, though primarily addressed to members of the church, furnish most profitable and timely counsel to us as a vast nation, and a most highly favored and prosperous people. Our advancement and growth have been so rapid and unceasing—we have been accustomed to look with such entire complacency and satisfaction, upon our elevation and superiority over most other nations—our undeveloped resources are still so abundant, and our progress seems so surely onward and upwards, that we have never failed to yield to the temptation to *exult* and *boast;* whilst we have felt that with such a triumphant past—such a cheering present, and flattering future, there is very little cause to *fear*. But we must remember that national greatness and perpetuity, do not depend entirely upon the vastness, wealth, skill, enterprise and mere intellect of the population; nor the extent and fertility of the territory, nor the growth of mere art and science; but that Jehovah has revealed himself as the God of nations; and therefore His *morality* and *religion* must *underlie* every thing else, as a means of national exaltation and perpetuity. Whatever, therefore, endangers these, puts the whole fabric in jeopardy; and though every thing else be unmolested, and exerting its most

*Eph. i: 3. †1 John ii: 16.
‡Gal. v: 17. ||James iv: 16.

wholesome influence; yet if *these* are wanting, the days of that government are numbered. What pleasure can there be in admiring or boasting of a stately mansion—its beautiful proportions, elaborate workmanship—variety and richness of ornament, and perfect adaptedness to the end proposed; if we know that there is a defect in its foundation, that will, sooner or later, induce dilapidation and ruin. Would not wisdom, and indeed every consideration, prompt us, without delay, to remedy the defect, and check the progress of the danger? Therefore, the divine oracles furnish judicious and needful counsel for the nation in those words "Be not high-minded, but fear." The foundations are being undermined—the *morality* and *religion* which Jehovah established: and therefore, His ministers should not keep silent; but raise their voices in the sanctuary, point out the danger, and "tell the people their sins." Simple questions of national policy—subjects of ordinary legislation—and affecting the pursuits and common secular interests of men, are inappropriate to the Lord's day, and His place of worship—but *sin*, *departures* from the revealed will of God—and denial of His providence and authority; should be more earnestly and emphatically set forth, in proportion as they are practiced by the masses, and become general in the nation. Having shown on a former occasion how intimately connected we are "as members one of another," we have now presented, as the subject of the second of our monthly discourses—*the dangers of the nation*—those things which should prevent our being *high minded*, and that we should greatly *fear*, because they relate to morality and religion.

There is wanting in our midst an *enlightened* and *high-toned patriotism*. This is the noblest passion that

enters as an element into the character of the faithful citizen. Its aim is to guard the rights, protect the reputation, and promote the prosperity of the whole country. It is opposed to individual selfishness—does not charge itself with the guardianship of mere local interests; but is concerned for the welfare and exaltation of the *whole* body politic. Although a man may be a *patriot* without being a Christian, yet is not patriotism akin to, if it be not, a Christian virtue itself? Does it not include love to our neighbor? enjoin us to labor for his happiness and improvement? and consecrate our services, and talents, to secure his elevation, and greatest good? How, indeed, could a separate people have ever existed without the carrying out of these principles? And does not the Bible teach the same? Did not the first nation ever known have its beginning, and preserve its existence, by resting upon these, as a foundation? When the elders of the Jews besought our Saviour to heal the centurion's servant, they gave as a reason for their earnest entreaty that he, though a Gentile from Rome, "loved their nation and had built them a synagogue;"* thus showing that what was commendable in a foreigner, must have been regarded as indispensable in one of their own people. So, likewise, Caiaphas asserts and enforces the highest exercise of patriotism, in order to accomplish the death of our Saviour, when he said "ye do not consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."† When Jesus was to be accused to Pilate, the burden of the harangue of the multitude was, "We found this fellow perverting the *nation*, and forbidding to give tribute to

*Luke vii: 5. †John xi: 50.

*Cæsar."** In their estimation He was not a *faithful citizen,* no lover of his country; but looked to the promotion of His own selfish and ambitious ends; "saying that He himself is Christ a king." And did Christ, or His apostles, ever rebuke the faithful soldier, whose business it was, constantly to expose his life in the service of his country? And has he not always good authority for yielding to the influence of this passion, when there is a righteous cause, in those emphatic words of St. Paul, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all."† "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."‡ The Gospel, therefore, furnishes the highest authority, the strongest motives, and the most convincing reasons for the cultivation and exhibition of patriotism, even in the last extreme to which it can be carried, the sacrifice of life. Have we not had its most perfect manifestations, in those great men in our past history, who were accustomed to bow to the authority of that Gospel, and guide their conduct by its sacred principles? And why should we not call it a *moral virtue,* yea, even a *Christian grace?*

But where shall we find its *living* and bright examples? those "epistles which may be known and read of all men?"‖ Are they in the public service? at the helm of government? in her varied offices? consecrating their time, energies and abilities to protect her rights? husband her resources? elevate her character? call forth her undeveloped wealth? and promote the peace, good

* Luke xxiii: 2. † Phil. ii: 17.
‡ 1 John iii: 16. ‖ 2 Cor. iii: 2.

order, morality, and highest welfare of her growing and impulsive millions? While we may see here, and there, a scattered few, like the more brilliant stars in a cloudy night, whose motto is, *"pro Deo, pro patria,"* "for God, and for my country;" there are almost unnumbered voices coming back to us, in reply to our interrogatories; crying, *selfishness, ambition, covetousness, corruption, degeneracy* and *unblushing, boldest theft!* And is there not *peril* in such a state of things? Can these passions, and departures from the plainest principles of morality, set patriotism to the *one side;* or trample it under foot as a worthless thing, and yet preserve harmony, peace and prosperity? Will the *many* be thus content to labor for the *few*? Will the multitude be satisfied to move in the shadow of *their* glory? Will they tolerate breaches of the principles of common honesty and rectitude, and call their perpetrators, "Honorable Masters," "Statesmen?" They may endure for a time; but change will come at last; when commotion, discord and anarchy will be seen: or which is far better, they may feel the necessity of guiding their conduct by that golden rule, given to God's ancient people. "Thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place such to be rulers."*

There is a *spirit of insubordination* prevalent in the land, that is always dangerous wherever it is permitted generally to prevail. Submission to duly constituted authority, and obedience of its laws, are not only essential to good order and prosperity; but are enjoined in the word of God as *religious duties.* Starting with the fundamen-

*Ex. xviii: 21.

tal principle that God is the source of all power—the Author, not only of the *family* and *church*, but also of the *State;* the Scriptures enjoin our *civil*, with the same holy sanctions, that they do our *moral* and *religious obligations*. From our Saviour's lips came those well known words—in reply to the Jews' artful question, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not?" "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." * So likewise St. Paul also says: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." † "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God." ‡ Consistently with these principles, we find the church always remembering in her prayers, "the President of these United States, and all others in authority." She prays that we may be delivered from all "sedition, privy conspiracy and rebel-

* Matt. xxii: 21. † Rom. xiii: 1–7. ‡ 1 Peter ii: 13, 16.

lion," and for a blessing upon all "Christian rulers and magistrates, that they may execute justice and maintain truth." *

But with our civil duties thus clearly set forth, and enjoined with such sacred sanctions, we cannot be ignorant of the fact that there is a growing opposition to these principles—that popular risings are justified by men of influence and intelligence; and that when the process of the law is slow and tedious; or its executors thought to be disqualified, and indifferent in the discharge of their trust; or there is a prospect of the escape of a criminal from the force of circumstances, or through the influence and power of legal council; it is deemed better and safer for the citizens to take authority in their own hands; by suspending, temporarily, the present incumbents of office, and inflicting that punishment which *they* judge the offence deserves. Justice may thus *sometimes* be attained, and a present evil checked: but what a dangerous principle is thus endorsed—what an irresponsible tribunal you set up—what a door you open, whence may issue evils, that will never run their course, till there shall be no authority to supplant—no laws to set aside—no confederacy and government to destroy. You at once enthrone mere *physical force*, without reason to guide, nor judgment to discriminate, nor fear of superior power, to check its headlong precipitancy: but impulsive, relentless, and maddened and exasperated by every successful exercise of its usurped privilege and authority; and unless checked, it will not only destroy the *civil rule;* but encroach upon all the relations of life—appropriate the gains of industry; and with the maxim emblazoned upon

*Book of Common Prayer.

its banner, that "*might makes right,*" it will raise the triumphant shout of *liberty*. Who has not known how all this has been shadowed forth; and indeed, in a degree realized, in the risings of the multitude in our cities, and the desolation that followed in their pathway? Does that *spirit of insubordination* still exist, and only need the semblance of a provocation to call it forth; who cannot see the danger that it threatens, and the calamity that it may produce?

Strange and contradictory as it may seem, even with a spirit of insubordination abroad, that justifies itself on the ground of the inefficiency of duly constituted authority; there is also a *sympathy* with *criminals*, and their *crimes*, that constitutes another *element of danger*, that should arrest our most serious attention. It is not that holy feeling of *charity*, and *compassion*, which the victims of great guilt should ever excite; while we acknowledge the justice and necessity of the prescribed punishment: but that which *interferes* with the penalty of the law; diminishes its severity; and, when it can, sets the criminal free; to continue his wicked career, and sink deeper and deeper, in soul-destroying degeneracy. A depraved man, nurtured in the midst of scenes of vice—accustomed to indulge every pernicious passion—a plague spot upon the community, and the dread of all with whom he comes in contact—goes and maddens himself with drink, and then is ready for a contest. He soon meets an antagonist: with a few preliminaries of crimination and recrimination, mingled with heaven-defying oaths, he lays his opponent prostrate in death. Then follows the arrest and imprisonment; a feeling of indignation spreads through the community; hundreds are ready to unite, animated by the spirit just alluded to, and burst

the prison doors, and inflict immediate punishment; lest he may escape the vigilance of the officers, and the tardy arm of the law. Soon the trial follows; evidence cannot be resisted; the counsel for the defence can find no *technicality* nor *insanity*, under which to shield him, and *sentence of death* is pronounced. And now follows the reaction. A heart-broken wife, and a family of young and unprotected children, are daily seen making their gloomy way to that convict's cell. How melancholy the sight! Public sympathy is awakened: but in the meantime, the widow and children, whom the murderer has deprived of father and husband, are forgotten; and for him alone compassion is felt and cherished. He is represented as having always been a *passionate* boy; without proper education and training; it may be his father was an inebriate, and perhaps his mother, too. He *himself*, was maddened with liquor; he is now *repentant*, and *why* should the heavy penalty of the law be visited upon him?. Thousands at once sign a petition for executive clemency; among whom are several benevolent, but sometimes inconsiderate clergymen: and if they do not gain a *full pardon;* he at least escapes *death;* to spend a few years in a comfortable, well-ordered *palace;* where, it is true, he is deprived of liberty, and obliged to labor; but, where he is *fed* and *clothed* and *warmed*, in such a manner that his *home* is indeed a *palace*, in all its appliances; compared to the *cellar*, *garret*, or *hovel;* where he has been accustomed to lead his miserable life, with his neglected household; when not absent upon his mission of vice and wickedness. If this is not an exaggerated and over-wrought picture, are we not thus, in one sense, paying a *bounty* upon crime? Far be it from me to depreciate, or

check, the efforts of benevolence and holy charity, for the true good of the unfortunate victims of their own base passions: but it is possible to go from the *extreme* of *inhumanity*, brought to light by Howard and others, in the dungeons of European prisons; to that *excess* of care and sympathy for the guilty; that shall tempt them to the commission of iniquity, that they may enjoy the noble charities which your liberality has provided. This sympathy is manifested also in that unwillingness to convict an offender, when testimony seems conclusive. Contrast the very small number of convictions and executions in this community, with the many murders that have been committed. Were we not told at the time of the last infliction of capital punishment in this city, that there had been but *one* other in *thirty-six* years, and only *three* in the county. But what a melancholy record of crime darkens the pages of your public journals; and how numerous the murders, during the same period! What significant and almost incredible facts!

See, too, this *sympathy* in another form; when the calamity of flying trains, broken up in sudden collisions, and of burning and sinking steamers; has consigned to a sudden and agonizing death, fifties and hundreds of human beings; when *no one* has ever yet been found who, it seems, can be justly charged with such wholesale murders. The *public heart*, that can so *bleed* at the idea of *one fellow being*, paying the penalty of willful murder upon the gallows; can contemplate the mangled bodies of men, women, and children, by the roadside or at the station-house; and hear their shrieks of agony, as they sink into the ocean's depths to rise no more; and experience only a *temporary shudder of horror:* while the *perpetrators* of these common calamities are simply

reprimanded for their carelessness, or dismissed from their employers' service. Men are constantly robbing the widow and fatherless, and making their fellow-beings bankrupt, under the shelter of an *incorporation act;* or by making an assignment, it may be of *fictitious capital*, when they have finished the career they have marked out. Guilt of the most odious character is all the time abroad—not only *unpunished*, but *bold* and *unblushing*: and this because, in a greater or less degree, there is a *sympathy* with *criminals* and their *crimes*—generally no *just* and *holy* appreciation of the *true nature of human guilt.*

Another *danger* which, as a nation, we have to fear, arises from a divorce between *education* and *religion*, in our public and most select schools—two things which were united by *divine command;* and "what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." * If we acknowledge the universal prevalence of human depravity—and is there any principle more clearly established, independent of the indisputable testimony of the divine revelation?—we must see the necessity of the introduction of that *leaven, our holy religion*, which shall change the corrupt nature, and assimilate it to itself. With *moral, intellectual* and *physical* elements in man; by what reasoning can it be shown, that *that* is *education* when only one or two, of the three, receive care and training? Is not that unnatural growth, when the arms alone are exercised, and all other parts are kept motionless? How little better than a brute, is the man who has simply cared for the development of the *physical* nature, while the *intellectual* and *moral* have remained unimproved.

*Matt. xix: 6.

Or, if the *moral* alone is neglected, how often he becomes an *intellectual brute*, with vigor of mind and body; but with a soul debased, and a heart so corrupt, that there shall be nothing odious in sin, nor repulsive in crime. But this divorce *has taken* place; and we have the fruits of the separation in all our broad land. To train the intellect simply, we only *half* accomplish our work. We make men capable of devising and inventing those varied schemes of deception and intrigue, in which their depraved nature delights. And does not the condition of the land give evidence of the power of this depravity, and the influence of this merely intellectual education? What a system of dishonesty and knavery in trade—what efforts to overreach and circumvent in contracts—what startling and astounding developments are every week arresting our attention in the public journals—revelations of great contrivances of knavery—the villainy of men who have for years enjoyed public confidence—the monstrous frauds of the cunning—the boldness of their acts—the long period during which they have been practiced, and the vast sums of money they have purloined—the suffering and poverty they have caused, and the premature deaths that have followed their career, of making themselves rich, while they made others wretched. And yet, these are all *highly educated* men, of general information, agreeable address; and they moved in *refined society*. Was it not a significant fact, recently made known, when the costly mansion of an *absconding private banker* was examined, it was found to contain *a library worth five thousand dollars*. If there is safety in *books* simply—if stores of knowledge are all that is required—if general intelligence in literature, the arts and sciences, will hedge up the human heart; bring-

ing into subjection the depravity within, and keeping out the temptations of "the world, the flesh and the devil;" then *this man* should have been a model of human excellence and integrity. If intellectual culture alone will bring every blessing that a nation can require for its exaltation and perpetuity; its purity of morals, honesty, justice, rectitude, and truth; then *we* ought to be distinguished for all these: but what excess of vice; what varied forms of transgression, what modes of appealing to the corruption of man, are there to be found; that do not secure their advocates and victims *here*, in the midst of as general intellectual light, as shines upon any other part of the *habitable globe*. But have we not *plague spots* daily revealing themselves; that startle by their magnitude; astonish by their number; excite dread by their virulence, and give evidence of a degree of corruption in the whole body; which shows that education, without Christianity, is powerless, before the might of the corrupt principles of our sinful nature? At this hour there is a people upon our western borders, trained in our schools, and with schools among themselves, that have grown from *one man;* to be a *community*, numbering their accessions in this, and foreign lands, by hundreds of thousands: and yet they have set aside principles, that enter into the very existence of *social life* and *domestic purity*—a community whose *very being* is an anomaly and a wonder—that *has its being*, indeed, because there was not that high-toned morality in the land necessary to check its beginning—and soon to ask admittance into our confederacy as a sovereign state; when a contest must commence, that will result favorably, or unfavorably, to the best interests of our country; according as our legislators shall bow to the authority of God's word, or be guided

only by mere intellect, without the light of Christianity. With the *threefold* nature rightly educated, man becomes all that duty, his country, and his Maker require; with religion banished, and morality set aside, he has within him, a power, that can make him a *monster of vice.*

The general use of *intoxicating drinks* constitutes another *danger;* which is not less to be dreaded because long practiced; and because the history of the past is filled with sad mementoes of its devastating effects. The vice of drunkenness has from the beginning, been presented in Holy Scripture, as not only deserving of *universal reprobation,* but as very especially offensive to the Deity. With almost innumerable instances of its tremendous power, over all that is attractive in genius, vigorous in intellect, winning in affection, and strong in rectitude—with testimony that cannot be gainsayed, of its supremacy over all the promises and prospects that wealth, ambition, elevation and dominion can exhibit; it is not now necessary, if there were time, to present statistics and arguments to establish this almost indomitable sway over its confirmed votaries. It is not *probable* that I have many inebriates within hearing to-night. If the use were confined to the inebriates of the land, the vice of intemperance would soon run its course. But our danger consists in the general prevalence of the practice; by which it gains this mighty power over every thing almost, that can be arrayed against it. It is the multiplication, in every street of every town, every village and neighborhood of our land, of the low haunts, where mixtures are dealt out, that cannot fail to spread desolation. To this statement is it replied that these places are frequented most generally by the *low* and *degraded,* and the foreigner, who is accustomed to this kind of indulgence; and that soon the

legislature* will close these sinks of vice and corruption, under the force of the growing numbers in favor of prohibition? Most devoutly is such an event to be desired. And will our danger then be past? Can there be a universal rejoicing then at the banishment of a monster from the land? Do we not know that he comes to us in various forms; that as there is a difference in the quality and texture of the rich and poor man's clothing; a difference in their articles of food and furniture, that there is also in their *drinks?* that a kind of refinement is carried into these, as well as other things? and therefore the whole danger is not thus reached. Who does not know, that while many men would not frequent the common place of public concourse, the scene of the lowest indulgence, and would even give their votes for prohibition; they have nevertheless in their own dwellings the safe deposit of *choicest* and *costliest beverages,* which are habitually used; and whose influence is not less fascinating and destructive? Who does not know that the same indulgence may be obtained at richly furnished and decorated public haunts, by paying a remunerating price? And who does not recognize the influence of these practices in the appearance, deportment, and exhilarated spirits of their devotees? In the habits of the two classes, is there not a distinction without much difference? Do they not lead to the same results? Will not the ruin be as sad and disastrous? Is not the reason dethroned, the sensibilities destroyed, and all that pertains to the great and noble in man, as surely wrecked in the one case, as the other? You convey the same idea, though not so offensively, when you give the *lie direct;* as when you

* Prohibition, in a limited way, was established in Pennsylvania, October 1st, 1855.

say, Sir, you do not speak the truth; or, you do not adhere to the principles of veracity. The *poniard* will cause death as certainly as the *broad-sword*—the *revolver* as the *musket*—the *rifle* as the *cannon-ball*—the well-directed cut of the *knife* of *refined steel*, as the *cleaver* from the shambles—the rightly aimed blow of the highly polished, *gold-headed walking-staff*, as of the *bludgeon*, fashioned after that of "Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother." The *danger* lies in *every form*, in which this enemy can be presented; as does the virulence of the poison in every covering, under which it may be concealed. When we contemplate the untold magnitude of the evil, and the proclivity of man to yield to the fascination, would it not be better to adopt the maxim of the apostle—"*Touch not, taste not, handle not.*"

For only a few moments longer can I allude to one other danger, that arrests our attention from the stand point we occupy in surveying the perils of the Republic. I allude to the luxury and extravagance manifested in the higher walks of life. The attentive reader of history need not be told that these were the beginnings of the decline and fall of ancient Republics. They awaken and foster such passions, create such artificial necessities, induce such indulgences, interfere with such holy duties, expose to such temptation, that the evils they bring with them may be called almost legion. For what is the general phrenzy for accumulation, that stops before no opposition, counts no cost, cheerfully exposes health and life, in laboring in new, unexplored and distant regions, unfavorable climates, and during successive years? Is it that avarice is so common, and that the miser is so generally abroad? Do men wish to gather and hoard up in

secure vaults, and bury in the earth? No. Is it because they have become aware of the gross darkness pervading other lands; and that they wish to send them the means of civilization and enlightenment? Or have they a desire to exalt the condition of the masses at home; and therefore propose to endow institutions for their education, and the church with means for their conversion? No. The aim seems to be neither to hoard, nor bestow in works of benevolence; but very much like that of the rich man in the gospel, when he said, "soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry."* It seems to be, to have means, to invest in costly mansions, furniture, equipages, luxurious living, a succession of amusements, entertainments, pleasures, personal decorations; and thus be the envy of the multitude, and the subject of their converse. And as there are gradations in society, and the community; so these evils spread, and finally pervade all ranks, till all partake in the sad consequences they entail. Like a crowd ascending a stairway; where one step is no sooner vacated, than it is at once occupied by some one, or more, of the moving mass below; so in communities, one class no sooner leaves a position that is occupied, and a pleasure that has been indulged, for something higher and not before enjoyed; than there is another ready to fill its place, and take up that which it has laid down; and thus evil multiplies itself among all the ranks of mankind.

And in these sad features of the land we are now considering, must not *woman*, to a considerable extent, be involved? Has she not countenanced and encouraged, if not originated and devised, much that now involves

* Luke xii: 19.

the country in peril and difficulty? Has not her pride, love of ostentation, ambition and vanity, had their influence in the expenditures, investments, usages, pleasures, and indulgences, that may all be embraced under the two heads, of *luxury* and *extravagance?* And yet how different is her true mission, her real greatness and glory. "Heaven's last, best gift,"* assigned to move in the noblest sphere, the possessor of the sweetest affections, endowed with powers and capacities to soften the hardest heart, remove the roughest asperities of character, lighten the darkest home, soothe the most excited mind, diminish the acutest pain, and spread peace, comfort and bliss in her every pathway; *woman* becomes a piece of *animated clay* in the hands of the *artisan*; to be decked for a show; a child to be charmed with glitter and tinsel; and burying her *whole soul*, her *very self*, beneath an artificial creation of wealth and folly, she bows a willing slave of pride and a sinful world. Place such an one by the side of that model of her sex,† one of England's noblest daughters, a child of affluence, refinement, education and personal charms; who, with her devoted associates, near forty in number, have now left their native land to go to the banks of the Alma, to minister to the wants of poor soldiers, wounded in battle, or prostrate in sickness. Who adds dignity, honor and glory to her sex; she who is clothed in gaiety and costliness, with scarce a thought beyond herself, for others' good; but ambitious to fill all eyes: or she who speaks the words of comfort, binds up the bleeding wound, and soothes the

* Milton's Paradise Lost.

† Miss Nightingale and her companions in the Crimea—and I may now add, the devoted women at Norfolk and Portsmouth.

troubled spirit on the battle-field, or in the hospital? O, woman!

"Last at His cross, and earliest at His grave,"*

be an example of humanity, endurance, devotion and faithfulness. Thy sphere is not less useful because unseen; not less honorable because retired; not less glorious, because removed from the din and strife of the outward world.

Such are some of the dangers of the Republic. Study them carefully, weigh their whole length, and depth, and height and breadth, and bend all your energies to check their progress, and avert the evils they threaten.

* "Not she with traitorous kiss her Saviour stung,
Not she denied him with unholy tongue:
She, while apostles shrunk, could danger brave,
Last at His cross, and earliest at His grave."

Woman—a Poem by Barret.
Quoted in Keble's Christian Year, St. Thomas' Day.

SERMON III.

UNBELIEF, A NATIONAL DANGER.

HEBREWS iii: 12.—"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

During the preparation of our last monthly discourse, which was devoted to the consideration of some of the more prominent dangers that threaten morality and religion in the nation, it was designed to include the subject of the present. But the topics which then passed under review, consumed so much time, that it became necessary to postpone to this occasion, the consideration of *unbelief*, in respect to its *causes*, and the *modes* of *its manifestation*. I can desire no more appropriate words to serve as a foundation, than that expressive and emphatic caution, and admonition, of the great and very discriminating apostle, already announced. "Take heed," &c.

The Israelites, after the delivery of the law on Mount Sinai, were enjoined to go forth, and take possession of the land of Canaan; and establish that worship of the true God, and practice those varied duties, which that law set forth: and God promised that He would drive out the wicked inhabitants; that they might enjoy undisturbed, their long anticipated inheritance. But

they did not believe the divine promises, feared to encounter the inhabitants of the country, and desired to turn back into Egypt, whence they had been so miraculously led forth. The apostle makes use of this fact in the history of the Jews, in moving the Hebrew Christians to a faithful discharge of their duties. They had received and embraced the gospel, were commanded to go forth into a wicked world, and set up its altars, establish its pure spiritual worship, and practice that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."* But they had to encounter greater dangers, and more terrible opposition than did the Jews; there was less probability of their success in the promulgation of the Gospel, than there was that Moses and his followers, would be able to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan; and therefore they were exposed to greater temptations to distrust the promises of God; and surrounded with stronger inducements to turn back to their former bondage to sin. In view of their greater peril, and with a full knowledge of their better foundation for the most undoubting confidence, and unyielding perseverance, the faithful apostle wisely and earnestly enjoins them to "take heed," &c.

Unbelief, in some one or more of its varied forms, has always been the great mountain barrier in the way of the progress of Christianity. It is entirely congenial with the corrupt passions and inclinations of the human heart. Whenever the one true, living and Supreme God has been presented, with His perfections, and solemnizing truths and principles, its unvarying exclamation has been, "away with Him,"† "we will not have

*Heb. xii: 14. †John xix: 15.

this man to reign over us,"* "we know not from whence He is."† At the early planting of Christianity, it appeared in *Jerusalem* and the *surrounding country*, under the form of Judaism; in *Corinth* it spoke from the haunts of licentiousness; in *Athens* and other *Grecian cities*, its oracle was a vain philosophy; at *Rome* it boasted, and challenged, and talked vociferously, in a long established and generally prevalent pagan mythology; among the neighboring, as well as far distant nations, it assumed a bolder front, and more repulsive form, as it entrenched itself in the ignorance, degradation, and brutality of barbarism. When in the course of successive years of faithful, self-denying labors on the part of the apostles and others, it had been in some degree overcome; and its former advocates were led to adopt the faith of Christ; it then, for several generations, appeared under the form of heresies, in the church itself; exciting controversy and contention, diverting the attention of the ministry from the work of converting souls, to the decision of points of faith; and thus unsettling the minds of many, and causing separations, confusion and distrust. During the long period of the middle or dark ages, it seemed content to repose in ignorance, apathy, and seeming indifference; when the church herself had lost her zeal and devotion, and was resting calmly and unconcernedly, under the enchanting spell of her *superstition*, and the deadening influence of her *formalism*. But when this spell was broken, at the period of the Reformation, and these superstitions were shaken off; when primitive truth was restored, and formalism gave way to the light of God's own pure word; *unbelief* awoke also in more

*Luke xix: 14. †John ix: 29.

than pristine power, and put forth her strongest energies, to check the progress of primitive Christianity, which was doing a noble and glorious work, not only against a usurper, and his pernicious errors; but changing the dark spots of sin, into scenes of loveliness and beauty, throughout extensive regions of country. It now had new weapons to wield, since the discovery of the art of printing, and other facilities for the communication of thought; and it may be said that unbelief used her every effort to show her own power, and the weakness of Christianity. Her attack was direct, bold, persevering, and in open day. Various works from master minds, upon the miracles, the authenticity of the Scriptures, their contradictions, inspiration, and the divinity of our Lord: indeed every point that was regarded as exposed, became the object of its attack; and down to the beginning of the present century, our religion has had constantly to keep her champions in the field, to meet an open, persevering foe. But in our day we find no such demonstrations of the power of unbelief. Her attack is not direct, nor open, nor in form and manner as it was fifty and a hundred years ago. We have no Paines, nor Humes, nor Voltaires. When was a new edition of their works published? What bookseller ever disposes of a copy, or has one even asked for? Is it because they were so effectually vanquished by their opponents? for a noble band of lion-hearted, eagle-eyed defenders of the faith arose, and stood unflinchingly at the gates of the citidal of divine truth: or is it because unbelief has changed the mode of its warfare, and now attacks covertly, in the garb of a friend, and with treacherous arts? We do know that much of the old armor is laid aside; that the regiments have been disbanded; and that

we seldom meet in uniform, even a scattered soldier of her former boasted army; a man who calls himself an *infidel,* and stands ready to defend his cause, as every true hearted soldier always should. Yet when has there been an age of greater and more deadly unbelief? It is our present purpose to set forth some of its causes, and modes of manifestation.

One of the most common forms under which it is exhibited, is the denial of God's providence in the material world, and human affairs. There is no doctrine of Holy Scripture more clearly revealed than this one of the ceaseless, special interposition of the Deity. He is represented not only as the Creator of all things, but as having all things under His control. When He threatened the transgressors, in ancient times, it was with a suspension of natural law, as when famine was to be sent as the punishment of guilt. He had already promised that, generally, "seed time and harvest should never cease;"* and famine must be the result of an interruption of that regularity, which the Creator had established. Our Saviour gave the assurance of His constant care to His apostles, by telling them that "not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father," and that even "the very hairs of our head are all numbered."† So, likewise, when He wished to check an inordinate anxiety for earthly things, He directed their attention to the fowls of the air, as enjoying His Father's watchful guardianship, and says, "Are ye not much better than they?"—and then to the flowers and grass of the field, and asks, "If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"‡ Yea, the prophet

*Gen. viii: 22. †Matt. x: 29, 30. ‡Matt: vi: 30.

asserts for Him still greater power, saying, "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing." "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."* Upon this well established truth of God's ceaseless providence, the Church has framed her offices, and set forth special prayers—as "for Rain;" "for Fair Weather;" "in Time of Dearth and Famine;" "in Time of War and Tumults;" "in Time of great Sickness and Mortality;" "for a Person going to sea,"† &c.—followed by thanksgivings for these, and other valuable interpositions. In the regular offices of the Church, we find the recognition of the same valuable truth; and out of it, in past days, has issued that common idea among men, that God's hand is in everything; and that His protection is to be sought in every difficulty and emergency. When the merchant was to send forth his ship upon the uncertain ocean, you found a prayer for its safety inscribed upon his bills of lading. When the civil authority called the people to thanksgiving for annual blessings, or fasting in deprecation of heavenly judgments, this providence was distinctly set forth in the official instrument, and closed with a petition to God to save the commonwealth. Did not our first Congress, upon which was depending, under God, not only our liberty, but our very existence as a nation, have daily prayer, and enjoy the services of two of our own clergy, as its first chaplains—a respected presbyter, and the first Bishop of this Diocese, the venerable Bishop

*Isaiah xl: 15, 22.

†See Special Prayers and Thanksgivings, in Common Prayer Book.

White? And when, in 1787, the Convention sat in Philadelphia to frame our Federal Constitution, days and weeks passed without any result, but differences of opinion and contentions; the celebrated Dr. Franklin arose and introduced a motion for daily prayers, saying, "In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers for the Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us, who were engaged in the struggle, must have observed frequent instances of a Superintending Providence in our favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time (81 years), and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that 'except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of heaven, and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this assembly before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service."* This language, breathing the very spirit of dependence and weakness, and so clearly recognizing the divine agency in human affairs, and national prosperity, was addressed to Gen.

* See Philadelphia Lectures, page 143.—Lecture by Bishop Potter.

Washington, the presiding officer, who in the midst of the darkest hours of the Revolutionary struggle, made the silent forest his temple—the earth his kneeling-place—and, beneath the canopy of heaven, implored the protection of the same Almighty Being for the cause he had in hand. And can we now witness opposition to the continuance of prayer in our Legislative halls—in Congress, the Army and Navy—without feeling that there is growing up in our land, a denial of God's providence? When the Church raises her voice in prayer in time of drought, famine, pestilence, or other heavenly judgment; do we not have evidence of want of confidence in such means for removing calamity? Is not God's providence virtually abolished from the earth, in the estimation of large numbers; and do we not hear of substitutes in its place—of an inexorable necessity in the immutability of nature's laws—and of a union of mighty agencies in the form of human skill, learning, foresight, invention, endurance, and energy? And does not here lurk a secret unbelief? Because if you banish God from the material world, and human affairs; can you retain Him in His Word, and the mere spiritual things he enjoins? For in banishing His providence, you destroy a portion of that Word where it is unequivocally set forth? Can you take away one of the four walls of your dwelling, and expect it to stand? Can you sever the main roots of the oak, and anticipate a successful resistance of the storm? Take care, then, how you deny the providence of God—one of the deep-dug roots of "the tree of life," and one of "the walls of the city having twelve foundations, in which are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."*

There are certain *theories*, and pretended *discoveries*

* Rev. xxi: 14.

of modern Science, which contain the seeds of the most dangerous *unbelief*. They have their advocates among the intelligent and the educated—the teachers and professors in our schools and colleges—are incorporated into much of our literature—have a place in our magazines and newspapers; and will gradually be introduced into the elementary books of instruction, and the text-books of our higher seminaries of learning. They virtually contradict the statements, and abolish the God, of the Bible; while they subvert that religion which the Holy Scriptures set forth. Among these, there is a theory of *physical development*, which finds very warm advocates, notwithstanding its novel principles and dangerous influence. It teaches that "all forms in nature, living and dead, have been gradually developed from a primitive, crude, and imperfect state,"*—and consequently we may anticipate continued progress and improvement in all time to come. Beginning with that which is little better than nothing, it makes it instinct with perfection itself; for this growth and progress, it is contended, are the result of an inherent law, and continually bring to light new forms of beauty, order and life, and show man himself but the improvement of a lower animal, and having his beginning in this mere crude element, the primary form of everything, animate and inanimate.

Another theory which modern Science has boastingly set forth, is denominated the *ethnological;* and teaches that the human race did not descend from one common parent; but that there are several distinct races, independent of each other; thus differing somewhat from the other theory, which makes man a simple development from a mere nothing, as is asserted of all matter around us. It

* See Philadelphia Lectures, page 158.

is at once seen that these theories are opposed to the Mosaic account of the creation—banish God and his providence; and that the latter aims a blow at, and would, if it could, demolish, the whole system of Christianity. Only the descendants of Adam would be involved in original sin, and share in the atonement of Christ; and the Gospel could have no claim upon the other races, that enjoy a different origin. But the Bible assumes that there is but *one* race, as stated on a former occasion;* calls the first woman *Eve,* or *Eva,* because "she is the mother of all living;" and says, by Paul's lips, that God "hath made of *one blood* all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth;" therefore this theory lays the axe at the very root of the tree of divine knowledge—the one revelation we have had from heaven. I allude to these subjects, not for the sake of entering upon the work of refutation—this has been ably, learnedly and satisfactorily done: but to guard you against the unbelief that they involve; for you will meet them in your general reading—the literature of the day, and among the intelligent members of society. Do we not know that what are called even the exact Sciences have changed their systems at different periods?—that the learned in these same subjects do not themselves agree?—that philosophy, geology, astronomy, and almost every other system that is waiting upon human investigation and research; have undergone changes, and sometimes been characterized by contradictory statements? And when the Bible has been battling, and gaining victories for near two thousand years; when she has valued trophies of her conquests; and her history is filled with glorious achievements and brilliant successes, in her struggles with the most

* See Sermon I, page 13.

powerful enemies that could be arrayed against her: is she now to lay down her weapons, sacrifice all the gains of the past, and confess herself a *cheat* and a *falsehood;* because modern Science has made itself a Goliath, and comes forth, and defies the armies of the living God? In all such times of threatening peril hitherto, and it will be so now; she has always had a youthful David, who could find a few smooth stones from the brook; and strength and skill to use them in the discomfiture of his enemy.

The next form of *unbelief,* we find manifesting itself in the very heart of religious bodies themselves, and is called *ecclesiastical* or *spiritual* development. It teaches that the whole of God's truth has not been given to man; but that in all ages, from the Apostles down, there would be new revelations; and thus there would seem to be some plausibility in the reasoning of *worldly men*— that, if everything else is improving and advancing, religion should follow in the same channel, and be made to conform to circumstances, times, places, and persons. The only difficulty with worldly men is, that they do not find that religion always developes at the *right time,* or in the *right* direction; and *they* have to content themselves with contending simply for the principle. In the face of this, however, the Scriptures inculcate; and the Church has ever held in her best days, the immutability and completeness of the faith. St. Paul says, that "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism."* St. Jude exhorts us to "contend earnestly for the faith *once* delivered to the saints."† Again, St. Paul says to Timothy, "Keep that which is committed to thy trust."‡ "Take heed unto thyself, and the doctrine; *continue* in

* Eph. iv: 5. † Jude 3. ‡ 1 Tim. vi: 20.

them :"* "charge some that they teach no other doctrine." And, finally, he seems to banish the whole principle, once and forever, when he says to the Galatians, "though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which *we have preached* unto you, let him be accursed."† But it is a singular and melancholy fact in the history of religionists, that *Romanism* and *ultra Protestantism* stand on common ground in advocating this theory, and thus verify the adage "that extremes will meet." Rome has been adding to her formulary of faith for hundreds of years; since the *peculiarities* which now distinguish her, were never heard of in the primitive Church of the *first three centuries.* It was thought that she had completed her system at the Council of Trent, during the pontificate of Pius IV., about the middle of the sixteenth century; but, since that time, individual prelates, in their desire to exalt the mother of our Lord, and promote her worship; have taught her *immaculate conception*, or freedom from original sin; and, during the last month, it is well known that Bishops were summoned from all parts of the world, to meet the Pope in solemn assembly, to consider and set forth this new article of the faith—this last development of truth, as held by that Church.‡

*1 Tim. iv: 16. †Gal. i: 8, 9.

‡And by the last steamer we have the following significant announcement:

"VIENNA, December 10th, 1854.

"The Pope, officiating at St. Peter's, promulgated at eleven o'clock, after the Gospel, the expected decree. The immaculate conception is declared to be the faith of the Church, and whosoever denies it is an heretic. Never were seen such crowds. Rome is intoxicated with joy."

What a demand it is upon our credulity, to believe that the same, or similar principle, which authorizes such additions to the Christian faith, should ever be advocated by any Protestant. And yet, when the pilgrims of New England were about to embark on board the Mayflower, at Leyden, in Holland, their pastor, the Rev. JOHN ROBINSON, used the following language in his farewell discourse: "If God reveal anything to you, by any other instrument, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am verily persuaded, I am very confident, that the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his holy word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the Reformed Churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go, at present, no further than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw; whatever part of his will our good God has revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it. And the Calvinists, you see, stick where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented; for, though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God: but, were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light, as that which they first received. I beseech you, remember, it is an article of your Church covenant, that you will be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God. But I must herewith exhort you to take heed what you receive as truth. Examine it, consider it, and compare it with other Scriptures of truth, before you receive it. For it is not possible that the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-Christian darkness, and that

perfection of knowledge should break forth at once."* Luther, Calvin, and most of the leading Protestants out of the Church of England, entertained very much the same views. The celebrated Whitfield said, in his day: "My doctrines I had from Christ and his Apostles. I was taught them of God. The Holy Spirit, from time to time, has led me into the knowledge of divine things; and I have been directed, by watching and reading the Scriptures on my knees, even in the minutest circumstances, as plainly as the Jews were, when consulting the Urim and Thummin at the High Priest's breast."† Dr. Scott, the well known commentator, uses similar language; and we find everywhere, the most undeniable testimony that these were the sentiments generally entertained. And what but unbelief, can be the result? Who can deny that there is a wide-spread infidelity among the Romish priesthood, especially in those countries where that religion is dominant; and among the people generally, an influence, that is fast producing the same sad end? With a boasted claim to infallibility and uniformity, changes and additions have ever marked the history of that Church: and at no time are her children protected in the possession of the faith of the Gospel. If, on the other hand, we look at those countries where the denominations have had sway, and this principle of development has been recognized and received, what a melancholy state of things arrests our attention, and causes our very heart to sink within us. Go to the native land of the Puritans, England, and we are informed that of "two hundred and sixty parishes established in their glory, in the days

* Philadelphia Lectures, page 199. † Ibid, page 203.

of Cromwell, two hundred and forty were Unitarian as far back as 1848."* In Ireland, we are informed, the number of families of Presbyterians has diminished 7,615 since 1847, nearly 1,300 per annum. In Protestant France, a traveler was informed, several years ago; that, of six hundred clergy, there could not ten be found; who dared to affirm that Jesus Christ was "God manifested in the flesh." In Switzerland, and at Geneva, he says: "I saw a proud sepulchral monument to Rosseau, but to forgotten Calvin, 'they raised not a stone, they carved not a line,' and no one can tell where his body reposes. The ashes of Servetus, to whose fiery death Calvin gave his voice, have been scattered over lake and hill, and have broken forth in blains and boils upon the whole body; while the opinions for which Servetus perished, are preached with trumpet tongue in the very Cathedral, from which Calvin hurled his anathemas against him."* In Germany, the land of Luther, another traveler could not find a single individual who believed in the eternity of future punishment, and the disappearance of almost every other fundamental article of the Christian faith, was nearly as general. If we come back to our own country and our own New England; where this principle had full sway, we find the results even more saddening. We have heard from their most distinguished ministers this language: "Original sin is an original absurdity." "We are as much indebted to God for sin as for holiness." Spiritual Christianity is to be henceforth the standard; "perish forms and creeds;" and hence, in New Hampshire, last year seventy, and this year ninety, Congregational societies report no infant

*Presbyterian Clergyman Looking for the Church, pp. 148, 151.

baptisms. "The Church must be re-built upon broader bases of faith. Its discipline must be altered, and other tests of communion, adapted to the times and societies, around us, be instituted."* Witness, too, not only the falling away from the Christian faith, under the plea of its development; but the divisions, controversies and animosities that have been the result, which are the sure forerunners of doubt and unbelief. These things hold the relation of cause and effect, as certainly as do the fruit and the blossom, the harvest and the seed. Our only safety lies in the strenuous maintenance of the Apostolic principle, that the faith was *once* delivered, and that it is to be earnestly contended for; while we reject, as a loathsome error, that Christianity is to be modernized, and made progressive, by additions or improvements.

Another form under which unbelief is manifesting itself in our land, is *Socialism*. Men love association and society; and the Father of us all designed to meet this longing of our nature, as well as accomplish other purposes; by the institution of His Church, as a great brotherhood, and mean of fellowship for the human race. But our day witnesses other organizations, whose tendency is to dispense with the Church, and thus make man's work supersede that of his Creator. I take two instances, not because I would make them prominent; but because I would use them as examples: Odd-Fellowship, and Sons of Temperance. We have here two Christian graces, *love* and *temperance*, as the ends to be attained, by gathering men together. By the contribution of an annual sum, a fund is obtained to provide for the sick, the widow and the orphan, and secure a suitable

*See "Presbyterian Clergyman Looking for the Church," p. 167.

interment for the dead. It renders its service just at the time it is most acceptable—when the heart is susceptible to kindness, a favor is precious, and a friend is needed. And if the recipient of this kindness has been recovered from intemperance, he perhaps feels the blessings of sobriety making their appeal; and being ignorant of the privileges of Christian fellowship, he exclaims, in the fullness of his joy and gratitude, "*this is my Church.* It has visited and cared for me in my sickness, fed and clothed me in my suffering, pledged its guardianship for my wife and children when I die; and provided a respectable interment for my dust, in suitable rites, and the attendance of its officers and members." But have you not been paying for all these things? Does not your fellow member stand over your bedside, and minister to your wants, because you are pledged to do the same for him? Is not every thing done as a mutual service? Your association is upon the principle of insurance: your kindness is rendered, expecting a return again. And yet this is your Church. Your orators call your motto,* "friendship, love and truth;" "the trinity of humanity." And is not this a form of blasphemy? They say that "light did not dawn upon the world till your institution arose"—"that it ushered in the day of man's redemption." And you appoint one of your number—it may be, an unbeliever, a profane man—to be the *minister in your church*, and solemnize the burial of your dead, with prayer and affecting ceremonies. And do you inculcate these Christian graces, *temperance* and *holy love*, as the Bible teaches them?—as a duty—by the

*See Oration at the Dedication of the Odd-Fellows' Hall, New York City.

love of Christ, and the threatening of the penalty of eternal death? Do you picture the glories and happiness of heaven, and the sufferings of the lost? You answer, No. You use only earthly motives—you appeal to self-respect, love of a good name, regard for his temporal welfare, and love for his family—all well in their place, but far inferior to those holy considerations, and purer motives, which emanate from the Gospel. You secure the pardon of *no* sin, satisfy *no* longings of the soul, impart *no* instruction, unfold *none* of the mysteries of the life that now is, awaken no sorrow in prospect of death, and reveal no eternal joy, as an inheritance beyond the grave. We cannot, therefore, regard your institution otherwise than as a form, under which is lurking opposition to our holy faith; you take one of the jewels of its crown and lower its value; you teach it to do *only half* its work, and then send its owner and possessor to the grave, without light to illumine its darksome recesses; and the soul to go into the presence of its God, uncleansed of its guilt. When you thus attempt to contend with evil, and do good, with other than divine weapons and instruments; when you exalt human agencies, and banish those that are heavenly; when you use the Gospel language without its spirit, and attempt to do its work without its sanction or support; you are abettors of unbelief, and inflict injury upon the one great work of human salvation, though you may relieve bodily suffering.

The abuse of private judgment in religion is a very fruitful cause of unbelief. It is virtually said that every man is to go to the Bible, and construct his own church and religion. He is possessed of infallibility, and is taught to believe that the faith he draws therefrom, is as sound, as that professed by the early martyrs, though he

may deny fundamental truths. But such a principle is not adopted in the *ordinary* affairs of life. What are the decisions of our civil courts? Not, surely, the dictates of each judge's individual opinion; but based upon precedent, and according to that general interpretation of the law, which runs back to the first case that arose after its enactment. When a question arises under the federal constitution, it is determined according to the received construction of that great instrument; not as each successive Court determines, if their opinion should differ from that construction. The echo of the plaudits of the multitude who gathered around a distinguished foreigner* from exile, a few years ago, has scarcely died away; and yet did he not, by his great skill and talent, endeavor to make the American people adopt his private judgment in the interpretation of General Washington's Farewell Address, in opposition to the natural and uniform construction of that document? Did he not convey the idea that it was our duty to go to the continent of Europe; and intervene for the relief of the down-trodden and oppressed; and act as a mediator, wherever there were injustice and tyranny? And did he not endeavor to find his reasons in that memorable paper, containing the parting counsels of the Father of his Country? And what now is the public sentiment in relation to that effort—that forced construction of an instrument, that is enshrined in the very hearts of this people? They would not permit such a perversion —they could not be deceived with his sophistry—and now, who can be found as his abettor or defender? Why, then, should such a dangerous principle be allowed in

* Kossuth.

religion? Christianity is from God to be *received*, not *created*. It has a history, accessible, prolonged, and easily studied; and the Church and her doctrines are to be accepted, and embraced, as they came from Christ and His Apostles. Open the door, and send in every man to choose for himself, and you *multiply*, *diversify*, and finally *destroy*. "During the four years of Cromwell's triumph in England, when this principle had full sway, more than one hundred sects arose, favoring the deadliest heresies." Milton was an advocate of the same idea, and *"whilst his fingers swept with such inimitable grace and grandeur, the strings of a seraphic lyre; alas! with a like facility, almost poetic, he swept over all these notes in the descending scale of theology. Leaving the Church of Rome, he became a Presbyterian, then an Independent, next Anabaptist, afterward an Arian, eventually a Socinian, and finally, at the end returned to a better mind." This principle has been unchecked in our own land; and what a scene religion presents here as its necessary consequence. Can there be a more efficient cause of unbelief; when we have, as the result of telling every man he can make his own religion, not only every form of religious error, but the most corrupting practices and soul-harrowing blasphemies? Truth is God's gift, and cannot be changed by man; and *Christianity* is the *highest form* of truth. It is not, then, the reason and wisdom of this day that can reveal it to us: but we must seek that which Christ and His Apostles taught and practiced, and which gave hope and consolation to their immediate followers. We must not be carried away with plausible representations—a faith that

* "Presbyterian Clergyman Looking for the Church," p. 171.

suits our taste and gratifies our senses—but have the full conviction, that it has come from God, embodies His will, and can make us "wise unto salvation."

I can now barely allude to the last cause of unbelief that will occupy our attention at this time. I refer to the inconsistencies and fall of Christians themselves. We know how we are affected at the sight of a faithless parent, husband, or wife, or child—at a want of principle in an ordinary citizen—and feel disposed to distrust the reality of integrity in man, and doubt whether filial, parental, and conjugal love is indeed a genuine passion, lasting, and enduring. But how much more calculated are the daily and glaring departures from holiness, and the final apostacy and fall of the Christian; to awaken doubt, and lead men to deny the reality of God's grace and truth in inspiring piety, and godliness. The world is gazing, with more than common watchfulness, at the daily walk of those who take the name of Christ, and bow before the ineffable glory of His majesty. Does resolution tremble—does temptation catch the eye—do they follow, even with cautious steps, the pathway of the deceiver—that *world* takes courage; it feels that Christianity has not such vast influence—is perhaps no better than its own morality. But, does principle give way—does love fail, and passion overcome, till that Christian falls, the victim of sin and guilt—it swells with pride, it declares the defection as a triumph of its own cause; and *unbelief* proclaims a *jubilee*.

Thus, I have endeavored to set forth, in all honesty and simplicity, the most important dangers to which morality and religion are exposed: and the question may arise, have we no *hopes* to cheer us? To this inquiry, my next discourse shall be a reply. In the meantime,

let us weigh well the solemn and important truths that have been presented; and remember that many of our perils are not glaring, but concealed, and wear an unsuspicious garb, and even appear in forms of kindly friendship. Let our eyes ever be open, and our ears unstopped; and our voices ready to advocate the undying principles of divine truth. We are entrusted with a precious legacy: let us hand it down to a coming generation, complete, undiminished, unincumbered.

SERMON IV.

HOPES OF THE REPUBLIC.

Isaiah lxv: 8.—"Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all."

To those who have been contemplating with us, in our last two monthly discourses, the dangers of the nation; there may seem but few hopes to cheer and animate, in the midst of so much that is calculated to depress and discourage. They who believe that morality and religion must underlie all true national greatness, prosperity and happiness, cannot fail to be aroused, and alarmed, when their foundations are being undermined, or even in any degree weakened. But a consciousness of danger does not *necessarily* involve irresolution and inaction—a supine yielding to its powerful influence, and a giving up of all as lost and beyond remedy, without an effort or a struggle. The very *conviction* of great peril will prompt an inquiry, and a looking out, for all means of escape, and hopes of deliverance. Having, therefore, on two former occasions, endeavored to point out the formidable and varied instrumentalities that threaten the existence and perpetuity of morality and religion in our much loved and

cherished land; it now becomes our duty to present such features and characteristics as are calculated to excite joyful expectation, cheerful confidence, and animating hope. This will not be done by any effort to diminish the magnitude or number of our perils, or overshadow and conceal their repulsive aspect, for *they* should always be kept conspicuous before *all* eyes; but by revealing elements of life, germs of goodness, and the actual workings of the holy and true, in the national heart; that thus we may learn and appreciate our real grounds of hope. The husbandman does not consign to destruction the contents of his granary, because he finds only the hardened and unchanged kernel; but scatters in hope, because he knows there is a principle of life within. He does not permit his valued fields always to lie waste, because they lose their verdure in autumn, and produce no harvest in winter; but at the appointed season puts his hands to the plow, and sows his seed in fullest confidence, because he knows they have fertility, and will, in due time, yield their increase. So, of the individual and the nation, it may be predicated, that though now repulsive and lying waste —though barren and unfruitful, yet if they possess an element of life and virtue—if susceptible of cultivation—if there be the seed of truth and holiness, there is ground for hope of change and growth; and instead of sinking into degradation and degeneracy, they should see reason for imploring divine protection, and improving every gift with which they have been entrusted. Their very possession of an element of life and goodness becomes an assurance of greater blessings; and God will spare the whole, for the sake of the faithfulness of a part. He will be patient and forbearing toward *all*, when even a

few are found to honor His holy name, and obey His inspired word, "for thus saith the Lord," &c.

We have set before us a vine dresser, contemplating a blasted and withered vine, which seems no longer worthy of his care, and a burden upon his hands. A single cluster still clings to the almost lifeless branch; all else is unproductive; and why should it be longer spared to occupy needed space, and mar the beauty of the vineyard? But when about to cut it down, and root it from the ground, a kindly voice of a considerate one interposes, saying, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it." That one living cluster contains sweetness and strength—tells you there is life in the root, and if spared, may yet send forth an abundance of healthful branches, and load them with luxuriant clusters of the choicest fruit. As the dresser spares his vine for the sake of the solitary cluster, and the blessing it contains, so saith the Lord, "will I do for my servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all." The prophet presents very much the same idea in another place, where he says, "as a teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." * Though a tree may be deprived of its foliage, and seem only a lifeless and useless trunk, yet there is life beneath, which soon will clothe it in richness, verdure and beauty. So, likewise, if the people of the land fall from virtue and holiness, or be summoned away by death, like the scattering of the leaves of the monarch of the forest, yet there is a seed left, whence shall come a multitude to fill their places. The same power which made *them* what they

* Isaiah 6: 13.

were, remains to mould anew the generation following. In contemplating our nation hitherto, in connection with its dangers, we may say we have looked at the unsightly oak, with its leafless boughs; and the repulsive vine, with its withered branches. It will now be our duty to find upon our national vine, that single cluster, with a blessing in it, for whose sake it shall be spared and saved to bring more abundant fruit; and to determine whether our national oak is that vigorous and healthful tree, "whose substance is in itself;" that, though it drop its leaves from year to year, according to a law of its being, does go on and expand so regularly that it must ultimately fill, and overshadow the land? It is hardly necessary to say that *that tree*, thus to be the means of our hope, *that cluster* that contains a blessing for our preservation and safety, is the religion of Jesus Christ. Our hopes for the future are in proportion to the evidences of its influence and power over the people of the land. We may boast of our widely extended territory and vast population; but these *alone* make a government unwieldy, and its administration difficult. We may rejoice in the midst of our wealth; but this, unchecked, generates pride, luxury and extravagance. There must be public integrity, virtue and holiness, the growth of Christianity, that are the very helm and compass, by which alone our ponderous, majestic and glorious ship of state can be piloted to a secure anchorage, and moored in enduring peace, prosperity and safety. *Wherever, then*, we can find traces of Christ's religion, there we have reasons for encouragement and confidence, in contemplating the broad future of the Republic.

The very fact that there is a growing consciousness of our dangers, and that increasing efforts are making to avert them, exhibits the influence of the religious ele-

ment in the public mind. *It* gives the vision by which these perils are discovered. *It* furnishes the light by which they are exposed. *It* presents us the true standard, and shows the necessity of an enlightened and high-toned patriotism, submission to authority, that there should be no sympathy with crime to influence its needed punishment—no divorce of religion from education—no encouragement of intemperance, luxury and extravagance, and warns us against cherishing "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." There is, among large numbers, a growing and deep-felt consciousness of these dangers. They see under what varied and deceitful forms, infidelity is gaining influence and strength. There is a general voice of indignant remonstrance, against the shameless and bare-faced follies of luxury and extravagance. A most formidable opposition has been raised against the overflowings of the monster vice of intemperance. Thoughtful and far-sighted men are discovering the sad consequences of banishing the Bible, and its religion from the public schools; and even they, who are high in authority, are not afraid to assert and enforce this important union, and show how essential it is to our general welfare and perpetuity. In the very first State paper of the present Chief Executive of your own Commonwealth, he very emphatically says: "Virtue, intelligence, and truth, are the foundation of our Republic. By these our institutions *can* and *will be* preserved. Ignorance is not the mother of patriotism, or of Republics. It is the enemy and destroyer of both. Education in its enlightening, elevating and forming influences; in the full power of its beneficent results, should be encouraged by the State. Not that mere intellectual culture, that leaves the mind a moral waste, unfit to understand the

duties of the man or citizen; but that *higher* education, founded upon, directed and controlled by sound and elevated *moral* principle, that recognizes the Bible as the foundation of true knowledge; as the text-book alike of the child, and the American statesman; and as the great charter and bulwark of civil and religious freedom. The knowledge thus acquired is the power conservative of States and nations; more potent in its energy to uphold the institutions of freedom and the rights of man, than armies and navies in their proudest strength." * And so, too, there is an increasing realization of the magnitude and influence of each of the great perils above alluded to; and as they are the things to which all men have a natural proclivity, and in which they take delight; there must be a wisdom and light, extraneous to themselves, that have revealed the true character of these evils, and awakened a dread of their consequences. The simple circumstance then that men are aware of their dangers—that they can see that their best interests and highest welfare are in jeopardy, shows that they have taken another measure of responsibility than their own, by which they judge of human conduct; and that they are looking at things by that heavenly light, which is always a ground of trust, whenever it is recognized and followed, in the varied relations of life.

Another source of hope is the fact that Christianity is a part of the common law of the land. Let no one be startled by this announcement, and construe it into a declaration of a union of the civil and religious; that the state is bound to a particular religious society or denomination; a declaration which cannot be more

* Gov. Pollock's Inaugural.

distasteful to any one, than your present speaker. Men are so sensitive upon this subject, and have been accustomed to hear so much of the evils of the establishment in the mother country; that they seem to take especial pleasure in the assertion, that religion is in no way connected with the State; and that the government is in no degree associated with its institutions, committed to its principles, nor bound to afford it protection. They contend, that this is one of the most attractive features of the nation, that there is this boundless latitude and liberty, and that there is nothing to prevent the introduction of idolatry, or even the creed of Mohammed. I, on the contrary, assert that this is a *Christian* nation, and it cheers me, and fills me with joyous hope, to know that Christianity is a part of the common law of the land. This is a matter that has been thoroughly discussed in our different States, and repeatedly affirmed by their tribunals; so that an assertion to the contrary can proceed only from ignorance, or willful rejection of fact. It was inherited from England, where one of her most distinguished jurists, Lord Mansfield, declared in one of his decisions; "the eternal principles of *natural* religion are part of the common law; the essential principles of revealed religion are part of the common law; so that any person reviling, subverting, or ridiculing them may be prosecuted at common law."* As far back as 1811, a most important and exciting case occurred in New York, wherein the defendant was indicted for blasphemy against God, and shameless reproaches, and profane ridicule of Christ and the Holy scriptures; tried, found guilty, heavily fined, and sentenced to

* See Curtis' address at Trinity College, page 18.

imprisonment. The case was most learnedly, and thoroughly argued; and after a faithful and attentive consideration of it, in all its bearings, Chancellor Kent, the judge, who may be called the Blackstone of America, affirmed the principle in an able and lengthy opinion, in which he says: "There is nothing in our manners, or institutions, which has prevented the application, or the necessity of this part of the common law. We stand equally in need, now as formerly, of all that moral discipline, and of those principles of virtue, which help to bind society together. The people of this State, in common with the people of this country, profess the general doctrines of Christianity, as the rule of their faith and practice; and to scandalize the Author of these doctrines is not only, in a religious point of view, extremely impious, but even in respect to the obligations due to society, is a gross violation of decency and good order." "No government among any of the polished nations of antiquity, and none of the institutions of modern Europe, (a single and monitory case excepted,) ever hazarded such a bold experiment, upon the solidity of the public morals, as to permit with impunity, and under the sanction of their tribunals, the general religion of the community to be openly insulted and defamed. The very idea of jurisprudence with the ancient lawgivers and philosophers, embraced the religion of the country."* A similar, but not so aggravated a case, was tried in our own State, and in this city, in 1824, in which every effort was made by the defendant's counsel to shield his client from punishment, by showing that he had not committed an indictable offence. But so well

* Johnson's Reports, vol. 8, pages 294, 295.

established was the principle regarded, that no argument was made on the part of the commonwealth; and the judge, with an array of reasoning and testimony that must have seemed irresistible, with precedent after precedent, and fact after fact, does not hesitate to declare in his learned and lengthy opinion, that "Christianity is, and always has been, a part of the common law of Pennsylvania." "It is not proclaimed by the commanding voice of any human superior, but expressed in the calm and mild accents of customary law. Its foundations are broad, and strong, and deep; they are laid in the authority, the interest, the affections of the people. Waiving all questions of hereafter, it is the purest system of morality, the firmest auxiliary, and only stable support of all human laws."* Can we ask stronger evidence of the truth of the principle under consideration; which, while it discards all church organizations, allows variety of opinions, and even discussions of all religious tenets; does so connect Christianity with the common law, that it may enjoy its protection, and secure punishment for those who cast reproach upon our Lord and Saviour, profanely scoff at the Holy Scriptures, and deny the being and providence of God. So well established has this principle become, that no Court can probably be found that would deny it. When, a few years since, the civil authority of a Southern State was remonstrated with by a Jew, because in a proclamation, recommending a day of general thanksgiving and prayer, Christianity and its divine author were spoken of, thus giving offence to a portion of the citizens of the State; the Executive took the broad and true ground, that we

* Sergeant and Rawle's Reports, vol. 11, pages 400, 406.

are a Christian people; that he was administering a government that recognized Christianity, and no other religion; though it might, and did tolerate the Jewish faith; and therefore there could be no just and reasonable objection to his allusion to the Saviour of Christians, and His gospel. When therefore we can feel that our holy religion has become engrafted upon, and incorporated with, so permanent and unchanging an element of the national life, as the common law; that the Judiciary of the land is, by virtue of its high functions, pledged to its guardianship and protection; unless it discard the authority of the past, and shut its eyes upon the teaching and example of unvarying history, for successive centuries; have we not reason to cherish hope, and find ground for cheerful encouragement?

But more than this, Christianity is in part associated with the *statute law* of the land; and in this we have another foundation and source of confidence. Some of its more important institutions, and principles, are not only taken under its protection; but enjoined upon every citizen by its high sanctions, and whose neglect is punished with its pains and penalties: and yet no one can say, the civil authority enforces a national religion, or in any way abridges the legitimate exercise of liberty of conscience in matters of faith. Foremost upon the statute-book stand the recognition and endorsement of the Christian's day of rest, commonly called the Lord's day. Although there is a considerable number of the Jewish nation in our midst, who still keep the Sabbath of their church; although there is a denomination of Christians called the Seventh-Day Baptists, because they observe the seventh, instead of the first day of the week; although the respectable society of Friends desire to

regard every day alike, and attach no especial sanctity to the Lord's day: yet there is one uniform law on this subject, and the observance of this *one* day is enjoined upon all classes of men, and the advocates of every form of belief. When testimony is to be taken in your courts of justice, that same law declares, that it is not sufficient that the witness is, in a worldly sense, moral, and enjoys the confidence of the community; but he must believe in the Supreme Being, and in rewards and punishments. He must, moreover, take an oath, unless he has conscientious scruples; and that oath is made, by doing reverence to the word of God, and imploring His help; and thus the law endeavors to secure the due administration of Justice, by calling to its aid, the truths and sanctions which Christianity can furnish. Whence, too, springs that standard of right and justice, by which every tribunal is to be guided, and which the statute imposes? Not surely from human wisdom and invention; not from man's naturally exalted and clear conceptions of the true, the honorable and the equitable: but from divine wisdom, as delivered of old by tradition, or in the inspired word. If we trace the history of every nation of the earth—nations in their glory and their downfall—we find that growth, prosperity, and happiness, have been most generally found, where the divine standard has been most highly exalted. The golden days in the history of jurisprudence have witnessed the supremacy of the mild and just precepts of the religion of Jesus Christ. Because, *approximating* to this standard, the systems of Lycurgus and Solon were more beneficial, and continued longer, than any political institution of antiquity. The system of Roman Jurisprudence inscribed upon the Twelve Tables of the Decemviri, for the same reason, continued a blessing for seven

centuries to Rome; and it has been truly said that "the tables of brass existed stronger than her invincible legions. The storms of popular dissension broke harmless upon them. The flames of the Gauls but freed them from the corrosion of time, that they might the more conspicuously proclaim justice; and though but the promptings of the religion of nature, and of the study and research of the civilian, they, like the stone tables of Sinai, existed as the sacred guardians of the people." Again, in the sixth century, after the foundations of the empire were decaying, and ignorance and corruption were spreading their gloomy pall over the land, why did "the Institutes, the Pandects, and the Code of the renowned Justinian" prove such a blessing, and restore justice to its ancient channels? We are told, because "in these writings the mild and regenerating influences of Christian love and charity are most happily displayed, in contrast with the unyielding severity and selfish policy of the old Roman Law, which made the name of a stranger synonymous with that of a foe, and even at the domestic altar, recognized the relation of parent and child, as that of master and slave. The change was like that of the cross, the instrument of Roman cruelty, becoming the expressive symbol of hope and mercy."* If we pass to our mother country, and contemplate the labors of a Glanville, Bracton, Fortescue, Littleton, Dyer, Coke, Holt and Mansfield, we discover a still closer approximation to that one perfect standard which the Gospel presents. This seems to be, as it should be, *the model;* and we may well regard this fact as a cheering omen, an auspicious circumstance: for what agency in the body

* See Curtis' Address, pp. 6, 7.

politic; what combination of men in the whole land, save the Christian ministry, can be so efficient for good—so promote true morality and religion—so spread self respect, and exalt the condition of all classes, as an enlightened, discriminating Judiciary; uniformly, fearlessly, and impartially, administering the laws, according to that standard of right and justice, which the Gospel, and the Gospel only, holds up for the guidance of men. Of such justice it may be said, "truth is its hand-maid, freedom its child, peace is its companion; safety walks in its steps, victory follows in its train: it is the highest emanation of the Gospel; it is the greatest attribute of God; it is that centre round which human motives and passions turn: and justice, sitting on high, sees genius and power, and wealth and birth, revolving round her throne; and teaches their paths, and marks out their orbits, and warns all with a loud voice, and rules with a strong arm, and carries order and discipline, into a world, which, but for her, would be a wild waste of passions."*

But the law of the land has adopted and enjoined still more of the good things of Christianity, and thus become its advocate and friend. In taking under its care, and framing regulations for social life and civil society; where did it find the standard of its requirements? It has prescribed rules for the organization, and preservation of society, and established limits and restrictions. Was it *accidental*, that these very *rules*, *limits* and *restrictions* are found in God's word? Was it accidental, or a singular coincidence, that almost, if not, every command of the decalogue, is enjoined, in some form, by the civil law? Does it not prohibit some of the very offences, and

* See Rev. Sidney Smith's Works, page 298.

immoralities, that the Gospel condemns? and are not all its enumerated vices, transgressions against the divine law? Whether Christianity furnished its standard of requirements, or not; whether it was designed to adopt and incorporate a part of Christianity or not; the fact cannot be denied that the civil law does, in many things, conform to the Gospel—has adopted a portion of its pure system of morality; and does punish, with due severity, and promptness, many heinous offences against the law of God. When we thus find a striking concord and agreement—the system of the law; but a reflection of that of the Gospel—that as the voice of God said from Sinai, "thou shalt do no murder, nor steal, nor commit adultery, nor bear false witness," so from the legislative hall, and the Senate house, the voice of the civil law proclaims the same commands; and that it has adopted a variety of regulations to preserve the various classes of society uncontaminated: whenever, moreover, we find the benevolence, mercy, and humanity, of the Gospel, gloriously, and attractively revealed, in the institutions of the land, erected under the auspices and by the order of the civil government—as her alms-houses, her asylums, her hospitals—when that government protects the weak, relieves the oppressed, and ministers justice to all: is she not furnishing hope and encouragement, that God, and His religion, will be honored and extended; and become an efficient instrument for the production of that "righteousness which exalteth a nation?" We may well rejoice, that there are no religious persecutions, and that the blessings of toleration are enjoyed in this privileged land; but we have as great reason to rejoice, that the law is the friend, and advocate of general Christianity; and that it makes common cause with the Gospel, in the

maintenance, and enforcement of those principles of morality, benevolence, mercy and humanity; which are indispensably necessary, to the purity and exaltation of a nation's character, the uniformity of her prosperity, and happiness, and the perpetuity of her healthful, useful existence.

Another source of hope is found in that just moral sentiment, and high appreciation of integrity, which are found so influential in most parts of our land. It is not seen alone among professing Christians; it is not that *vox populi*, which some would regard as *vox Dei*; but it is a widely extended public opinion, upon morality and religion, which exercises a happy and restraining influence over large masses of our population. It is quiet, unostentatious; not boastful, nor presuming; and yet real, living and influential. Men seem to know that it is in the street, the market, the assembly, every place of trade and industry, by the fireside and in the court of justice; and yet you cannot locate it—no class monopolizes it, and it is difficult to define precisely what it is, and give its true dimensions and proportions. And yet when the occasion demands it, it exercises its authority, and issues its commands, and multitudes yield submissive obedience. Sometimes its dominion is so noiseless, and its influence so general, that we wonder where the *potent agent* is *enthroned*, that can exercise such a powerful sway, without an array of subalterns, to enforce compliance, and punish the refractory. For example, when in 1848 the chief magistrate of the nation was to be inaugurated, and thousands who had been delighted with his military exploits, were waiting the interesting occasion in anxious expectation; the 4th of March occurred on Sunday. No counsel of the

people was gathered to deliberate upon the propriety of a postponement. It is not known, that a single voice was raised in favor of the desecration of the day. There was this public sentiment, this high appreciation of the holy and the good, that silently, and without opposition, postponed this great national solemnity to the following day; when the hero and patriot took the oath of office, and received the congratulations of a confiding people. While to show the absence of this sentiment in another nation, when the first President of the then French Republic, now the Emperor Napoleon, was to be chosen in the same year, the election was fixed *for*, and actually occurred *on* the Lord's day. At other times, this same sentiment will emerge from its hiding place, assume a kind of ubiquity of existence, by appearing in all places at the same time; and gifted with ten thousand tongues, will so afford vent to its displeasure and indignation, that the very heavens will seem to echo back its withering rebukes, and merited denunciations. For example, when recently, in a well known murder trial, in a neighboring state,* where wealth, talent, influence, and distinction, were successfully employed to protect the guilty, a verdict of acquittal was announced—we can all remember how this same sentiment spoke out from almost every public press—at the corners of the streets, in every place of concourse, while it probably kept back in the individual heart more than it expressed; and placed an indelible mark upon that unfortunate victim of his own passions, which he must carry to his grave. When justice had been perverted, the occasion seemed to demand the interposition and expression of its judgment;

* Ward's trial in Kentucky.

not to interfere with, and reverse the sentence of the court; but for the infliction of a penalty even greater than that of the law—for how many deaths must not be endured by living in public disgrace, and self-inflicted banishment from the companionship, and sympathy, of your fellow man. So, too, a favored individual may be riding upon the full tide of popularity—friends may throng his path, and elevation after elevation may be the gift of his warm admirers. Friendship, confidence, and profound respect, may fill all hearts, so that his will shall be their law: and *then* let him, in an evil hour, commit some flagrant act—poison his neighbor's domestic peace, forge his name, or prove in some other way base at heart—and *what a change in an hour!* Respect, confidence, and friendship, are withdrawn, as if preconcerted—admirers disperse as if by agreement—and popularity dissolves into thin air, as if by a law of its nature. All is the result of the silent but certain influence of this high public appreciation of rectitude—this elevated moral sentiment, that will not be trifled with, wronged and trampled upon; that consigns to merited dishonor, and oblivion, all those who offend against the purity of social life, or prove devoid of that integrity which both the civil and divine law rigidly enjoin. Why do the sensual, dissipated, and inebriate, practice their indulgences behind darkened windows, and screened entrances? Why do gaming, licentiousness, and other forms of vice, retire to the upper room, the unfrequented street, and the narrow alley? Why should they close their haunts and homes, more than the merchant does his salesroom, or the mechanic his workshop? Because of this same ever-moving, ever-present, Argus-eyed public sentiment; whose piercing gaze they are ashamed to encounter, whose

severest rebuke, and heaviest condemnation, they know they deserve. Here, then, we have a check upon evil, an element of good, a source of encouragement, and a reason for confidence.

But our highest and surest hopes spring from the actual existence, and pervading influence of Christianity itself, throughout all parts of the land. It may be mixed with many errors—many religious bodies may have departed from the pure faith, and rejected many of the profitable institutions of the early church of our Lord and His apostles; but the sanctifying, restraining and elevating influence of the principles of the Gospel, is felt among all classes of our people. Four years ago, it was reported,* and probably these figures fall short of the actual truth, that there were, in the states and territories, nearly thirty-nine thousand church edifices, capable of accommodating nearly fifteen millions of persons; considerably more than one-half of our whole population—the value of church property was then about ninety millions of dollars; and the number of clergymen was about thirty thousand; receiving for their maintenance, some six millions of dollars. When we remember that the support of religion is not compelled—that these churches and other church property—that these salaries of clergymen, and other contributions for missions, and general charities, are not the compelled, but voluntary offerings of the people; have we not the most incontrovertible, and very gratifying evidence of a powerful, active, living religious element in our population? When we add to this, the controlling, hallowing effect of this religion upon individual conduct—that Christians again

* Compendium of United States Census, 1850, page 132.

in their respective positions and spheres, being "renewed in the spirit of their minds," and "adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things," do exert a most restraining, sanctifying, and healthful power, over hundreds and thousands around; can we attach too much importance to that Gospel, which has thus wrought such gratifying results, and is still doing a great and noble work in this land? We sometimes hear the lamentation that religion costs so much—that so many millions are paid for church buildings, institutions, and the support of the clergy; but what would be the state of things, if these were all banished, by a condemnatory law of the legislature? If, with six millions now paid to thirty thousand clergymen, you contribute twelve millions for the maintenance of criminals, and thirty-five millions to the members of the bar; it would be a valuable and instructive question for the arithmetic of these complainers: how many millions would be required for our courts and their criminals, if the vast and wholesome power of the Gospel, and its advocates, and defenders, were unknown in the land? Brethren, believe it, or not, that Gospel, with its hard-working, persevering, servants and laborers—its elevated morality—its pure principles and motives—its examples of fidelity, courage, and patriotism—its revealed Providence over the destinies of nations, as well as individuals—its supreme God as Lord of heaven and earth—and all the fearful consequences of unfaithfulness in this life, and that which is to come: is, without question, the very sheet anchor of the ship of state—the corner-stone in the great temple of our liberty—the *one cluster* of the otherwise withered and decaying vine, in which there is a blessing; and for whose sake it shall be spared—the towering and

majestic oak, "whose substance is in itself," spreading and expanding every year; that "*tree of life*," under whose "shadow we may sit with great delight," "whose fruit shall be sweet to our taste," and "whose leaves are for the healing" of this and "all other nations."

Such, brethren, are some of the grounds and reasons for encouragement and hope in contemplating the uncertain and mysterious future of morality and religion in the Republic. But what are hopes, without the means of their realization? Your attention, therefore, in the next discourse, will be directed to the necessary inquiry, What is the most effectual mode of securing and perpetuating religion in the nation? As we separate, let us not forget that we are stewards of the Lord, entrusted with the keeping and exemplification of His Gospel; and though but individuals, we are charged with a sacred trust for ourselves, our fellow men, and the glory of our God. We must "work the works of Him that sent us while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work."

SERMON V.

VARIETY OF SECTS.

THE ROMISH SYSTEM.

St. James iii: 16.—"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work."

1 St. Peter v: 3.—"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

In resuming the series of discourses, which was Providentially interrupted on the evening of the first Sunday of the present month,* it is proper to call your attention to those subjects which passed under review in the last, in order that you may see the connection of that, with the considerations that will be presented at this time, and during the two coming months. An effort was then made to derive hopes for the increase and continuance of Christianity in this nation, from the growing consciousness of our dangers—the facts, that Christianity is part of the common and statute law of the land—that there is a moral sentiment, and a high appreciation of integrity among large numbers—and the actual existence, and pervading influence of the Gospel itself in all our bor-

* By an attack of sickness.

ders. The mind, once convinced from these considerations that we have much to inspire encouragement and confidence, would naturally inquire, *how* are *these hopes* to be most effectually realized? Or *what* is the *best mode* for extending and perpetuating Christianity in this, or any other nation? We are, therefore, met together this evening to consider, in part, this important question. Strictly speaking, there can be but one answer to this—the *best mode* for the promulgation of the Gospel among any people, and bringing them under its righteous and blessed dominion, is that which Christ himself instituted and prescribed—which His apostles proceeded to carry out immediately after His ascension; and which generally was faithfully adhered to during the first three centuries of the Christian era. Had that divine plan been continued without change since that period, there would be no occasion for such an inquiry as that now before us; but rival systems of man's device—departures from evangelical truth and apostolic order—and a multitude of separations and divisions, are presented everywhere; so that Christianity no longer seems to human eyes, like the great Sun of the Universe—one, indivisible, and full of dazzling glory—the only source of light, life, and cheerfulness—nor as prominent, and conspicuous, amid a multitude of dimly shining stars; but it seems to have been brought down to a level with them—to be only one of a constellation—at which men gaze with the seeming conviction that all are equally the work of the Creator; and deserving a different measure of admiration, only as they excel each other, in size and brilliancy. Men contemplate all bodies, calling themselves Christian, as equally authorized to dispense the blessings of the Gospel, equally the institution of Christ—and when they

are seeking connection with His church in the public profession of their faith, they seem to forget that Christ instituted *one body*, and prescribed *one mode* for the salvation of men. We must, therefore, take men as we find them, the advocates of a variety of systems, and measures; and endeavor to discover the true and divine way, by weighing all human schemes, and existing institutions, with sound reason, experience, observation, and holy scripture. We cannot set aside the inquiry as unimportant, and leave the rising generation to grow up under the delusion that there is no *stability* in Christianity—that *all modes* are equally successful in its promulgation, and that they be multiplied to any extent, that human ingenuity may devise. Every individual must be "fully persuaded in his own mind," after mature examination and study, according as he has ability and opportunity: and it is likewise the bounden obligation of the ministry, not only to teach the truth, but warn against error; however attractive the form under which it is presented, or closely mingled with that which is genuine and valuable. And this obligation becomes more imperative, according as these forms of error are multiplied, and gain their too credulous advocates.

There are those among us who believe the *great variety* of sects, and religious bodies, a very efficient, and perhaps the best, mode of imparting the blessings of the Gospel to this nation. On account of the toleration enjoyed here, there is no country where they are as numerous, being from sixty to one hundred in number. The argument used is, that as there are various classes—degrees of ignorance and knowledge—difference of opinion, and taste; churches should be so varied, that they may be suited to all—so that while one embraces

the wealthy—another the educated—another the middle class—another the poor—another the foreigner, there may be a home for all; and thus the greatest number will be reached, and all will be in some way cared for, receiving his portion in due season. It is also argued that a profitable emulation and rivalry, are thus excited; and that they thus "provoke one another to love and to good works"—that zeal awakens the sluggish—industry excites the indolent—perseverance arouses the desponding, and success encourages the despairing. But when we contemplate the actual workings of the sect spirit, since its first appearance—the true influence of separations and divisions among Christians; how different are the results we behold—how the head is bowed in shame, over the desolations they have caused, and the promising harvests they have blighted; and we take up the language of the apostle, as most forcibly and truly embodying their true character and influence: "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." The success and triumph of one body, has awakened envy and a spirit of detraction in the less fortunate and favored. No struggles and contests have been more violent, or protracted, than those of rival religious factions; and what have been the consequences? Not, certainly, love for Christ, and deeds of kindness—not the spread of the Gospel, and building men up in the faith and fear of God: but *confusion*—unsettling their minds—destroying confidence—removing the land-marks—and *every evil work*—exciting malice, intolerance and persecution—abridging personal liberty by imprisonment, and depriving of life by slow torture, the axe or the flames. So, likewise, if the tendency and design of a variety of sects in a nation, are to gather in the different classes of men, as they are distinguished and separated from each other by

occupations, worldly circumstances, and intellectual attainments; and make them feel that they are distinct from one another in their religion, as in other things; are we not introducing a leaven of discontent, suspicion and hostility; which, like sectional prejudices, interests, and collisions, may ultimately lead to open ruptures, and ceaseless contests? Everything in a nation should tend to unite, rather than separate—but what more effectual mode of arraying men against each other can be found, than the inculcation of *this* idea, of a church for the poor, the ignorant, the artisan, and the rich, the educated and the refined; that God had prescribed different conditions of salvation, according to men's varying circumstances, and attainments—and that though they may be connected together as employer and employed, citizens of the same community, state and nation, under the same system of laws, amenable to the same tribunals: yet in those things that relate to their best, because eternal interests, they are separated; and have their distinct, independent, spiritual home, to which they are always to resort for comfort, guidance, instruction and blessing. Of all things, members of the same confederacy should be united, if possible, in their religion; and when they are, it will become a bond of union, and preserve a government, when everything else tends to its destruction. Is that, then, a judicious policy; is it true patriotism, to advocate the multiplication of religious bodies, to stand arrayed against each other, to engage in controversy and strife; because all classes and conditions may thus seem to be more effectually reached? In making partisans do we always make Christians! Let us examine if the Scriptures do not show us a more excellent way!

We know that the great burden of the sacred volume is an exhortation to *unity*. Very far back in the dim

obscurity of time, before the patriarch had received his significant name of Abraham, in token of a greater blessing from his Lord, he said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren."* The affectionate benediction of Joseph to his brethren, at their departure for the land of Canaan, to make known to Jacob their father that he was yet alive, was, "See that ye fall not out by the way."† The most touching strains that accompanied the Psalmist's instrument of many strings, were, "behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."‡ What was the design of the incarnation, sufferings, and death, of our blessed Lord, but to gather together in one household, His scattered, that they all might be one in Him? In His inimitable prayer, as recorded in John xvii, He uses this expressive language relative to all that believe in Him, "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Under whatever image the Church is represented, whether as a bride, a widow, the body, a fold, she is *one;* and though His children may be scattered over the face of the land, though there may be a flock with every pastor, yet they all constitute one fold, one body, even as there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism."‖ There is nothing against which Christians are more frequently cautioned than divisions and separations; and their sad consequences are portrayed by analogies and illustrations which cannot fail to be understood; as, when St. Paul said to the Corinthians, "for as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being

* Gen. xiii: 8.
† Gen. xlv: 24.
‡ Ps. cxxxiii: 1.
‖ Eph. iv: 5.

many, are one body, so also is Christ."* Why, then, have we these exhortations to unity—these striking and expressive comparisons, setting it forth—if Christ and His Apostles knew not what is in man, and the mode by which his necessities could be supplied, and the greatest good carried home to his soul? It should be a sufficient condemation of any principle or system that it is contrary to the plain teaching of God's word.

These divisions are also opposed to the analogy of things. In nature, the single current of air is comparatively powerless; leaving no traces of its progress, and yielding to every obstacle in its path: but let several currents be united, and weakness at once becomes strength, and they sweep over the land like the united regiments of a mighty conqueror. Contrast the force and influence of the many tributaries separately, with the almost resistless flowings of the majestic river, which they combine to form. Why stand our primeval forests, battling for scores of years with the furious storm and tempest, and remain unconquered; while the scattered trees of the open plain, are prostrated by far less commotion of the elements? The single extended wire breaks asunder under a few pounds' weight: but united with others, in the enlarged *cable*, and it bears up safely over the maddened stream, and yawning gulf, the extended train, freighted with hundreds of living beings, or the fruits of human industry and skill. When does a nation expect victory and glory from its arms? when there is a variety of leaders, and conflicting counsels, disagreement, and confusion? when each division operates separately and alone, each envious of the other, and one gaining greater renown by the other's misfortunes? or when there is *one*

*1 Cor. xii: 12.

will, one unbroken system—and such a combination of their forces, that all obstacles bow before them? when they shall be so closely banded together in one body, that the mysterious bond of their union shall seem as powerful, as the principle of attraction, that unites the particles of matter in the unbroken mass of rock? If, then, this law of "*strength in unity*" obtains in nature, and all lower and common things, with which we are constantly familiar; and that we see verified every day and hour of our lives; does it cease its influence, and control, when the inquiry is relative to the best mode of spreading the Gospel among the multitude, and bringing them to obey its commands on earth, that they may be exalted with Christ in heaven? Are disagreement, disorder, many wills, variety of systems, division of God's embattled host, favorable to the success of His righteous cause? the subduing the pride of His strong enemy, and making "the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ?"* Have we authority thus to change the idea, as well as language of the apostle, and make it read, "where envying and strife is," there is *order*, and *every good work?* Are strength, influence, harmony, and success, associated with unity, order, agreement and concert of action, in all things else, but the means of the spread of the Gospel? and is *that alone* to be promulgated, and made to triumph, by discord, separations, envying, hostility and constant opposition among those who profess to be looking and laboring that God's "kingdom may come," and that "His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven:" Our reason, and common sense, unhesitatingly reject such an idea;

* Rev. xi: 15.

and we feel convinced, that all God's laws in grace and the system of the Gospel, harmonize as uniformly and attractively, as they do in nature and the common things of life.

This multiplication of religious bodies is, moreover, a fruitful source of unbelief; and for this reason, if there were no other, is very far from being the best mode of planting Christianity in the nation. If our Saviour, when on earth, prayed that His disciples might be *one*, in order that the world might know that the Father had sent Him—thus making Christian unity, one of the evidences of His own divinity and heavenly mission; what must not divisions, and disagreements, produce, but denial of that divinity, rejection of that mission, and all the holy truths and principles it was instrumental in bringing from heaven to earth? The law of cause and effect, is as clear in this, as in the changes of nature, and the events of life. Take the history of any department of science or philosophy—is not the degree of confidence you awaken, generally proportioned to the harmony and agreement of its advocates? and does not that theory and system make slow progress, and gain few friends, or perhaps fail to secure any accessions; because of the ceaseless differences, and want of concord among their professedly warm admirers, or originators? Do we not hear men constantly distrusting the reality of friendship, and integrity: because they, who would have us believe they are actuated by these holy principles, so frequently dishonor them, by acts of unkindness, dishonesty and malevolence? So, too, when men contemplate the great number of religious bodies, enrolled under the same banner, having the same guide-book, aiming at the same great end; and yet separated—at times arrayed against each other, and differing in outward organization and spiritual things; what must be the effect but distrust,

doubt, and final rejection of the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ? There are thousands now wandering in the mazes of unbelief, who were first led astray, by this sad state of things in the history of the progress of Christianity. Even the unenlightened heathen have the discrimination to perceive how inconsistent is the variety of Christians sent forth for their enlightenment and salvation; with the *one revelation* put into their hands, the *one atonement*, church, faith and Lord spoken of; and the *one heaven*, where all are seeking their everlasting resting place and home. If we knew the experience of the ministers of God's word, who have inquired the reasons for men's rejection of the Gospel way of salvation; or if we could study the secrets of their hearts, who are yet "without hope and without God in the world;" it is believed that we should find this spirit of division, this constant multiplication of organizations under the plea of gaining a purer Christianity; erected into a wall of adamant, that stands as a seemingly insuperable breast-work, between hundreds and perhaps thousands, and all the brightening hopes and eternal rewards that the Gospel holds out; while they perhaps may die, in their present condition of peril, to experience in eternity the fearful realities, which no unfaithfulness or differences of professing Christians can prevent their inheriting; since they sin against undoubted light, and testimony that centuries have not been able to overturn. From these weighty considerations, drawn from Scripture, reason, analogy and facts, we think the position is conclusively established, that religion is not most successfully, nor rapidly promoted in a nation, by separations, and divisions among those who are already its friends and advocates.

But while there is this great, and we may say, lamentable variety of religious bodies, there may be said to be

only three distinct *systems* for carrying on the work, although they all have many things in common, and agree in many essentials; yet these systems are marked, prominent, and influential, with their respective advocates; and may be denominated, the Romish, the Denominational, and Episcopal or Church systems. The first will be briefly considered in the remainder of this discourse, the second on the first Sunday in April, and the third will close the series on the first Sunday in May.

The Romish system is venerable for its antiquity; but not the antiquity which sets forth primitive and apostolic Christianity. It has been the prevailing religion of many nations for centuries—the disburser of their wealth—the teacher of their youth—the conservator of their morals—the keeper of their faith—not only protected by, but the guide of their kings and rulers—wielding a long, unbroken, and absolute influence and dominion, and having, humanly speaking, all means, energies and powers so entirely under its control, that if it be what it professes to be, nothing seemed wanting, to make its every land, a paradise of saints. But what a scene those nations present, that have been placed under its moulding process, like clay in the hands of the potter. What people, after successive generations have been submitted to all its best and most efficient influences, can be said to present the morality and piety of the Gospel as prominent characteristics, and controlling principles of action, among any considerable number? When France was most entirely under its control, and for a long period had been sitting at the feet of that church as its spiritual mother, it became a nation of infidels.* Thus it has been said "the massacre of St. Bartholomew revenged itself upon

* See Church Review, vol. 3, page 271.

France by leading directly to those influences which made Romanism what it was in that beautiful country in the times of Louis XVI, and that again as naturally gave birth to the infidelity of Voltaire, and the atheism, anarchy and butcheries of the French Revolution." If we turn our eyes to the vine-clad hills and fertile valleys of Spain, in what can it be said to be deficient as regards fertility and variety of soil, location, climate, exuberance of production, and the rewards of industry—what nation has been more gifted intellectually, or had greater capacity for enlightenment and elevation; and yet the words of the inimitable missionary hymn of our own Heber, are as applicable to benighted Spain as Eastern heathen lands, where

> "Every prospect pleases,
> And only man is vile."

And yet here, too, for centuries, this system has had sway. Wherever we travel, whether through the States of the Church—along the banks of the Rhine—in the sunny South, or the colder North—through the village or city—we may see the work of art and the monument of genius—the church that has been hundreds of years in building, and the library whose first volumes have been gathering dust upon its shelves, perhaps for more than a thousand years—but we cannot find a Christian nation, distinguished for the observance of the Lord's day in a devout and religious manner, and the practice of those other holy duties which the Gospel enjoins in all the relations of life, and upon all classes of men. On the contrary, it cannot probably be denied, that infidelity is generally prevalent, and multitudes everywhere fast

losing, even the semblances of religion, and yielding themselves to the lowest sensuality and vice. If we direct our attention to this continent, I presume no one needs information relative to the condition of Mexico and the South American States—countries first discovered by Romanists, visited by their missionaries—and ever since under their influence and control in all things that can contribute to their temporal welfare and eternal happiness. Their system seems to have made those nations Christian in little else than name. But we are especially interested in noting the working of this system in our own land; not that it ever has been expected even by the greatest alarmists, that it could have become predominant during the short period of its existence here; but that we may discover whether it is best calculated to promote the great ends of the Gospel in this Republic. The presentation of a few statistics prepared by another, and some admissions by their ecclesiastical authorities, will aid us in this inquiry.* "With what success have the Romanists met in our land? Maryland was originally settled by them. Until the year 1820, Florida was as completely theirs as Cuba is at present. In Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, and all the territory west of the Mississippi, they held the ground, and had a golden opportunity for laying broad and deep their foundations. But in which of these States have they now a predominant control? In Maryland there are but 65 Romish churches, while there are 800 Protestant. Of 152 in Florida, only five belong to the Pope. Of 278 in Louisiana, only fifty-five. Of 134 in Texas, only thirteen. For the last fifty years, Romish

*Rev. Mr. Henderson's Sermon.

emigrants have landed on our shores by millions. There have also been monthly importations of ecclesiastics, who now number 7 archbishops, 33 bishops, and 1,754 priests. There have been started, and kept in operation, 20 colleges, 29 theological seminaries, and 120 female seminaries, and 22 weekly, 1 monthly, 1 quarterly and 2 annual periodicals. But with all these appliances, what have they gained on the Protestants? What is their comparative strength in numbers? The Protestant houses of worship are as 32 to 1. The nominal Protestant population as 12 to 1, and the actual sittings in Protestant churches are as 22 to 1." It was estimated several years ago by one of their Bishops, that considering the vast emigration, and the various means they had employed they should number five millions, while their actual strength was then less than two. The Romish Bishop of Chicago recently issued a pastoral letter, in which he gives probably an impartial view of the condition of his church in this country. He says: "Our church is destitute, her sanctuary is empty, her ministers are sinking under the weight of labor, there are none to replace those that fall, there are no means of supplying immediate wants, of diffusing more widely the blessings of religion, or of educating those whom we might look to as a provision for future necessities. Where can we find a devoted offspring to fill up the thin and ever decaying ranks of the holy tribe? Your own children refuse to become God's ministers? Is it not manifest that religion is lost, if confided to this keeping? To prevent this calamity, we must turn our thoughts to foreign lands, to those lands where the faith has flourished amidst the fiercest tempests. To instruct you in the ways of God, to prepare you for heaven, to recall you in

life from error, into the ways of holiness, to sanctify with the blessings of religion, your dying moments, for all these holy purposes, we must in a great measure look to distant countries, to Ireland, Germany, France and Italy. From the same remote regions are to be invited, with encouragement, learned professors, who, living among us, may impart the education best suited to our country and condition. Books and seminaries and salaries, and the ornaments of the church and sanctuary, these too are to be procured only with an effort and expense that fills us with fear." Such are the admissions of one high in authority, and such is the actual condition of the Romish church in this land, according to well authenticated confessions and statistics. I have relied chiefly upon these to show that it is not the best system for perpetuating morality and religion in the nation; although this is but a small part of the argument that can be adduced; and should we therefore resort to proscription, to pains and penalties, that it may be checked and overcome? Never. Let there be the same liberty of conscience to all, and whenever error is to be opposed let it be met, not by denunciation—combinations of men to deprive its advocates of their civil privileges—but with the armor of God's truth, and the strength which will always be furnished by the holy principles of His inspired, uncorrupted word.

So, likewise, to check the dangerous influence of separations and divisions, let each examine for himself—study the Scriptures, early Church history—reject every human organization—give no encouragement to the common idea that it matters not to what communion you belong—inquire for the Church of the Apostles, and the first three centuries, and believe that creed which rests

upon God's word as its foundation, and has had no addition by its transmission along the changing track of more than eighteen hundred years.* "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."†

* 19th of the Thirty-nine Articles. † Jer. vi: 16.

SERMON VI.

THE DENOMINATIONAL SYSTEM.

1 Corinthians xiv: 26.—"Let all things be done unto edifying."

It will be remembered that we are now engaged in an examination of the different modes that are actually in operation for disseminating Christianity throughout our land; and that it was stated in the last discourse, that notwithstanding the great variety of religious bodies in the country, there are *three distinct* systems; which were designated respectively, as the Romish, the Denominational, and Episcopal or Church systems. The first having been already considered, the second will now occupy our attention; while the third will close the series on the evening of the first Sunday in May.

In discussing the subject before us this evening, it is not designed to pronounce judgment upon the doctrines of any religious body, nor attempt to convict of any error in faith by bringing them to the test of Holy Scripture; for it is neither my disposition, nor privilege, to enter upon so unprofitable a work in a land where no restraint is imposed upon religious opinion. But it is proposed to consider the mode, by which the Christian denominations are promulgating the truth of God, as they have received it, and aiming to make this a Christian

people. There surely can be no impropriety in such a discussion, when kept within the bounds of charity, and conducted with reference to the apostolic rule in the text, "let all things be done unto edifying." The great end of the Gospel is to instruct, improve, enlighten, and elevate; therefore all the details of the work of bringing men to a knowledge and practice of the principles and precepts of revelation, should help to promote these ends.

It is not sufficient to *hold* sound doctrine, and be *careless* in regard to the manner of its *promulgation*—to enjoin public worship, and prescribe no profitable mode by which it shall be conducted—to exalt the preaching of the Gospel as a means of grace, and be indifferent about the character of the persons who are to deliver God's message to man—to command each individual to pray, and yet be unconcerned whether the duty is performed humbly or thoughtlessly, familiarly or reverentially—but "all things are to be done unto edifying." By this rule it is proposed to consider the subject before us, and draw our conclusions from the practical workings of the mode which has been generally found among the various denominations. It may seem singular to speak of this agreement among them, when they are separated by distinct organizations, and forms of doctrine; yet there are certain *prominent* peculiarities belonging to all, which go to make up what may be called the *denominational* system. In maintaining many great and fundamental principles, we acknowledge their influence and power—in opposing the overflowings of ungodliness, they have done most valuable service—in zeal, labors and sacrifices, they have furnished bright examples to their fellow Christians of all names; but the question is not, whether *good has been done*, but what is

the best mode for the extension of Christianity among men? is that system which receives their general approval, calculated to lay broad and deep the foundations, and rear a superstructure of Gospel faith and holiness, to the honor and glory of God? If it is, a careful examination will serve to render its excellence and value, more prominent, and conspicuous: if it is not, we cannot too soon be made conscious of its deficiencies, and taught to guard against the dangers in which they are involved; for we must continue to remember the apostolic rule, "let all things be done unto edifying." "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."*

The first feature that arrests our attention in contemplating the history and present condition of the different denominations of Christendom, is *change*, a want of *steadfastness* in their adherence to those standards of doctrine, with which they began; which they professed to derive directly from the pure fountain of the inspired Word, and which, therefore, had the *highest*, because a divine claim, to man's implicit faith. It is scarcely necessary to say, that *stability*, and *uniformity*, are absolutely necessary to permanence and success in everything; and that the surest and speediest way to undermine any theory, and institution, whether human or divine, is to divest them of their attribute of *fixedness*, and furnish them with a succession of garbs, in which to appear before men, for their contemplation and acceptance. And yet facts compel us to say that this is the *very attitude* in which Christianity is presented by the various religious bodies It cannot be said that *one* of the more influential and

*1 Cor. xiv: 33.

prominent denominations has remained true to the principles with which it began. Originally there was one organization for each—one system of faith, and one mode of government. Now of the three most numerous bodies, there are four varieties of Methodists, not less than six of Presbyterians, eight of Baptists, with more or less change, marking all the inferior Societies. But not alone are they divided, and arrayed against each other in the attitude of hostile opponents; but the professed successors of the original body, and the ostensible inheritors of its standard of faith, have rejected its principles, and suppressed its fundamental truths. The doctrines of the Trinity, the divinity of our Saviour, original sin, the atonement, and the nature of the two Sacraments, are not taught now as they were by Calvin, Knox, and the Westminster divines. The Confession of Faith teaches individual election and reprobation—speaks of baptism "as a sign and a seal of the covenant of grace, of the ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins"—"that the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost"—that there is a Sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified—and that in the Lord's Supper, "worthy receivers do inwardly, by faith, really and indeed feed upon Christ crucified; the body and blood of Christ, being there, not corporally and carnally, yet as *really* and *truly*, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses." Yet when does a Presbyterian pulpit announce the unpopular tenets of Calvanism—a limited atonement—and inculcate the general necessity of the Sacraments for spiritual life and growth? On the con-

trary, are we not told that those tenets are now seldom entertained; while, in some parts of our country, infant baptism has gone entirely into disuse—the Lord's Supper is never administered more frequently than once in two or three months; and generally regarded, not as a mean of grace, but a simple memorial. It is the humiliating testimony of their observant divines, and their periodical press, that there has been everywhere, in Europe, Great Britain, and the United States, a general giving up of those more prominent principles, which were incorporated into the Confession of Faith, and regarded as essential to the very existence of the Church.

When we look at the numerous body of the Methodists, and trace their history, we find not that stability and uniformity which are necessary to inspire confidence, and lay the foundation for perpetuity and influence. To this day we hear the most unqualified praises of their founder, the Rev. John Wesley; their people are referred to his sermons, and other teachings, as setting forth the principles by which they are guided; and yet the Methodism of 1855, would scarcely be recognized as the growth of the Society he established. For more than fifty years he solemnly reiterated injunctions like these. "Carefully avoid whatever has a tendency to separate men from the Church. Exhort all our people to keep close to the Church and Sacraments. Warn against despising the prayers of the Church. Against calling our Society the Church. Against calling our preachers ministers; our houses, meeting houses; call them plain preaching houses or chapels." "If the people put ours in the room of the Church Service, we hurt them that stay with us, and ruin them that leave us. Let this be

well observed. I fear when the Methodists leave the Church, God will leave them."* This language seems to have been literally prophetic, for one of their own most estimable ministers said, in March, 1852, of England, where the body originated: "Desolation reigns in many of the most fruitful parts of Methodism." And after describing the sad condition of those towns where it had been most flourishing, he says: "To witness all this is most distressing, heart-breaking! Religion weeps neglected in these circumstances. No revivals, poor congregations, dispirited and mourning disciples, jealousies, hard speeches, and scandalous, ribald reproaches against each other, are the bitter fruits of this state of things."† It is now ascertained that the loss to the body cannot be less than near ninety thousand members in three years. In the last sermon Mr. Wesley published, only two years before his death, and four years after the Society was established in this country, he says: "I hold all the doctrines of the Church of England. I love her Liturgy. I believe one reason why God is pleased to continue my life so long, is to confirm the Methodists in their present purpose, not to separate from the Church. Though ye have, and will have a thousand temptations to leave it, and set up for yourselves: regard them not; be Church of England men still."‡ In that Church he breathed his last, asserting unceasingly his devout attachment; and was thoroughly proof against every appeal to renounce its Apostolic and holy communion. Yet in one year after

*Ch. Review, vol. 5, page 421, 22. Wesley and Methodism, by Isaac Taylor, London. Tour in U. S. and Canada, by James Dixon, D. D.

†Dr. Dixon's Tour, &c.

‡Church Review, vol. 5, page 422.

his death, the British Conference voted to decide by lot, whether they should administer the Sacraments, which had never been done in Wesley's life time. The next, the rule of Wesley, "not to preach in church houses," was expunged. The third, they repudiated "gowns, cassocks, bands and surplices." In doctrine, the articles of religion were mutilated and diminished in number by Wesley; the offices changed and abridged, though retaining much sound teaching; and thus the work of change has been going on till we read of the last General Conference South, that the "Discipline was brought under very general revision. Many changes were made. The axe was laid at the root of many a time-honored sentence and paragraph. Change was the order of the night. Some of these changes, as in the baptismal and ordination services, were, no doubt, just and necessary in order to conform the ritual to the doctrinal views of the church."* And yet that Discipline was Wesley's work; the fruit of many labors; anxious hours of thought; and embodied the doctrines he taught in his discourses, and held up as the standard of their faith. And yet it was changed to be accommodated to the present faith of the body; a significant evidence of departure from the first principles of their Society. We might proceed to give as convincing proof of instability in other religious organizations, if it were necessary. Our only object in the presentation of these unquestioned facts, is to establish the position, that religion must become stable, fixed, and uniform among religious bodies, before confidence can be established, and a firm foundation laid, for that "righteousness which exalteth a nation." As long

*Richmond Christian Advocate, June, 1854.

as changes are made in doctrines, which come from God; and can no more be remoulded, than the forms of nature; as long as each man is told he can frame his own religion, instead of taking that which God has provided for him; so long we shall find men ready to lay aside the old, and adopt new principles for human guidance; and those Christian denominations in which they are incorporated, will sooner or later feel the effects of their reformatory labors, in the withdrawal of confidence, diminished numbers, and final dissolution. That, certainly is a defective plan for spreading Christianity among a people, that presents no permanent truths, nor fixed principles; but recognizes the necessity of change, with each passing generation; and whose history is marked by vacillations so numerous, that the element of truth becomes obscured and finally lost; amidst the additions, novelties, and vaunted improvements of human wisdom.

Another argument against the denominational system, is its partial withholding of the Holy Scriptures from the people. This will seem a strange, and contradictory statement, when you consider the thousands that have been expended in scattering the Bible broadcast through the land; and translating it into more than one hundred and fifty different languages, for the use of the various nations of the earth; but I refer to the keeping back of its glad tidings from the worshiping assemblies. To send the book of God to every family in the land, is a noble work; but how many thousands are seldom or never opened, we may infer from the fact, that there are so many who have no interest to prompt them to seek a knowledge of its saving truths; but when they are gathered in the sanctuary, set apart for worship, on the day hallowed by God, and consecrated to religious

things; when opportunity, circumstances, and time, favor the presentation of the revealed word; we find that this class of Christians, instead of making use of these occasions for disseminating the greatest possible amount of religious knowledge; provide for the reading of half a chapter, never more than one; and this most generally from the New Testament, to the exclusion of the Old; seeming to forget that "*all* scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect; thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* If these denominations are as really impressed with the importance of spreading the divine Word every where, among all conditions of men, as is indicated by their liberal contributions, and zeal in the Bible cause; would it not naturally be expected; indeed does not *Christian consistency demand*, that they furnish their gathered congregations with abundant supplies of the seed of the holy Word; instead of such *minute* portions; as if the Lord's garner can be exhausted? In consequence of this limited reading of Scripture, do we not find a lamentable ignorance of the Bible among large numbers of their people! Have they not been calling public attention to this neglect through their press; thus showing consciousness of the great evil? while one of their own ministers,† with twenty-seven years experience, in a flourishing New England town, speaking of the young, who came there from different sections, says: "I find in my frequent intercourse with them, that they possess a knowledge of none, or nearly none, of the distinctive principles of the Christian faith.

*2 Tim. iii: 16, 17. †Dr. Edson, of Lowell, Mass.

I find in them a great ignorance of the Bible; which they profess to take as their guide. I find many, not only unable to repeat the ten commandments, but entirely unaware of their being any ten commandments at all." Another equally creditable authority states that persons, spoken of as "coming out bright Christians from a revival, could neither repeat the commandments nor the Lord's prayer."* Could this most lamentable ignorance have existed, even if there had been no other means of instruction, if the Old and New Testaments had been faithfully and largely read to them every Sunday; and the ten commandments as frequently pronounced in their hearing? Can there be religion in the nation, unless the language of Scripture is made familiar as household words; unless it is known from the least to the greatest, and all are permitted to hear the joyful sound of God's heaven-born truth? and will this be done by placing the Bible in every house, where there is no disposition to seek its pages for the treasure it contains? Suppose that the thirty thousand clergy of the land, were to read to their fifteen millions of hearers every Lord's day, twelve chapters of the Bible, which is done in every Episcopal congregation; what an instrumentality for good; twelve chapters to fifteen millions fifty-two times a year, besides week day services! What a leaven of God's truth would be spread through this land; what light would break through the darkness! what a blessing would be scattered among all classes! what beauty would spring from deformity! what joy from sorrow! what holiness from sin! For is not God's Word, made accessible to us all in our own native tongue, and full of

*See Church Review, vol. 5, page 354.

blessing for every one who is familiar with its overflowing fountain? Even a Roman pervert, supposed to be the celebrated Dr. Newman, in the midst of the delusions and darkness in which he has become enshrouded, cannot repress the memories of his English Bible, which became a part of his moral being and spiritual life, whilst ministering at the altar of that venerated English Church, which he so treacherously abandoned. Even he has recently said, and with evident sorrow and sincerity: "Who will say that the uncommon beauty, and marvelous English of the Protestant Bible is not one of the great strong-holds of heresy in this country! It lives on the ear like music that can never be forgotten; like the sound of church bells, which the convert hardly knows how he can forego. Its felicities often seem to be almost things rather than mere words. It is part of the national mind, and the anchor of national seriousness. The memory of the dead passes into it. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses. The power of all the griefs and trials of a man is hidden beneath its words. It is the representative of his best moments; and all that there has been about him of soft and gentle, and pure, and penitent, and good, speaks to him forever out of his English Bible. It is his sacred thing which doubt has never dimmed, controversy never soiled. In the length and breadth of the land, there is not a Protestant with one spark of religiousness about him, whose spiritual biography is not in his Saxon Bible."* Is this the language of a Romanist; the spontaneous outcomings of a heart, full of love for the deep clear well of God's truth, where all may

*Banner of the Cross, vol. 16, page 93.

come and drink? and can it become "a part of the national mind, and the anchor of national seriousness," simply by being laid upon the shelf of the poor, the ignorant, and vicious; and apportioned out twice on the Lord's day, in minute quantities of fifteen and twenty verses?

The denominational system is objectional from the fact, that *revivals* have been relied upon as the chief means for the more general spread of Christianity. Far be it from me to say one word against the elements of good they contain, or to depreciate the benefits they have brought to ungodly souls; for when I remember the vacillating condition of the human heart, the zeal and coldness, the interest and apathy that mark its history; when I consider the varying state of congregations, at one time alive to every duty, and earnest in the work of the Christian calling; and at another, indifferent to the holiest things, and unconcerned at the spiritual desolation, that is within and around them; I know that if there were not a *revival*, a *waking up* of the slumbering soul; that religion would die in the individual heart, and take its flight from the cold and seemingly lifeless congregation; and therefore we are taught to pray on every occasion of public worship, that "God will make clean our hearts within us, and take not His Holy Spirit from us," and on the fourth Advent Sunday, that He "will raise up His power and come among us, and with great might succor us;" and on Ash Wednesday we are invited more fully to open our burdened hearts, in those earnest petitions: "Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned. Be favorable, O Lord, be favorable to thy people, who turn to thee in weeping, fasting and praying."* But this is not the revival system that has

*See Common Prayer.

characterized all the denominations, with few or no exceptions, for the last half century. It originated in modern times, and is of human invention. It can in no sense be *divine*, for our Saviour's whole teaching was designed to exhibit Christianity as a *life work*; as something to be *done* as well as *felt;* and not to be secured *instantaneously*. His sermon on the mount tells of no raptures, nor visions; seeks to promote no tumultuous excitements; and presents our duty, as consisting of a succession of continuous efforts, proceeding from those holy motives, that can alone give value to our works. The revival as exhibited among them, cannot be called a *Scriptural* system; because if the case of the three thousand, brought under deep conviction by the preaching of Peter, be adduced; we shall find that the reply of the apostle to the earnest question, "What shall we do?" was, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;"* while the modern convert professes to receive his pardon at the very instant of conversion; and whilst in the midst of his praying friends, prostrate before his God, he says he finds the joy and comfort of a forgiven and reconciled child; and yet he has not complied with Peter's command, to *repent;* for he has no time to call to mind the sins, whose recollection is to cause it; and he does not receive baptism for days and weeks afterwards, though the Apostle has associated remission of sin with the right reception of that sacrament. If St. Paul's conversion is instanced, it can be easily shown that it was extraordinary and miraculous, and therefore furnishes no criterion; yet allowing that it was not; we

* Acts ii: 38.

hear of no pardon of sin, no reconciliation to God—till he had passed three days without sight, in humiliation, fasting, and prayer; till he had been counseled by a minister of the cross, who thus said to him, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*

If we examine the philosophy of the system, we shall find little to commend—that while it may be the means of some good, it produces incalculable evil among large numbers who are brought under its influence. Excitement, we all know, is never associated with long continuance of time—it is unnatural, and opposed to the very structure of the human mind, which cannot long endure intense emotion, without being enfeebled or deranged. If we have found our highest spiritual joy when under the influence of strongly awakened feeling—if at the revival, with all the combined influences there used, we are taught to believe we shall experience our purest religious joy; what other alternative presents itself, but the necessity of continuing the excitement in order to have pleasure in religion; or else to experience doubt and despondency, when the occasion of our pleasant emotions has passed away. As we know the excitement must be temporary; what other effect can we anticipate, than the falling away of large numbers, who have made the loudest professions during a revival. Consequently we find that a respectable Methodist preacher, Mr. Hamilton, said, recently, "Mr. Maffit's last great demonstration in Baltimore, was at the Eutaw Church, where, in a meeting of four or five months continuance, eight hundred converts were received into the Church on trial, and

* Acts xxii: 16.

of that number, six months after, not more than forty were considered worthy of full membership."* The question is not alone, was it not a glorious work to find forty faithful to their Lord and Master: but what was the condition of the seven hundred and sixty! Was not their last state worse than the first? When they found there was no reality in their religion—that it did not remain with them, when the excitement had passed; would it not produce a want of confidence in the power of Christianity? and would it not be much more difficult ever to awaken them again, while the natural and final consequence must be indifference and unbelief. The system likewise discourages the humble and distrustful, by holding up a certain standard of feeling, to which all must attain, before they are permitted to regard themselves as favored of God, and the recipients of His mercy. Hundreds, who are timid, and have exalted views of the holiness of God, are thus kept back from His service, and deprived of His blessing; because they have been led astray by this false view. Our whole land feels the effects of this hitherto wonderful agency in bringing men, as was supposed, to the foot of the cross. Even thinking and sober-minded Christians were almost awed by the seeming power of this instrumentality; and the vast numbers that were brought under its influence. The increase of the various religious bodies that adopted it, has been almost incredible; and their ministers have been accustomed to look to it almost exclusively, as the agency for extending Christianity. If they could not have one or two revivals in the course of the year, they felt that God had withdrawn His presence, and the converting influences of His spirit. We were

* See Banner, vol. 15, pp. 350.

pronounced formalists, and destitute of piety, because "we would not run with them to the same excess." But how often we learn wisdom by the very painful pathway of our experience—how often time developes results, that our zeal and sanguine faith could never have anticipated. *Now*, these same ministers write articles, and books, for the world, upon the evils of revivals. In one of the ablest and most influential periodicals of the Methodists, we find this language: "It cannot be denied that the system of recruiting our Church by revivals, has been seriously abused: and that the faith of our preachers and people, in the benefits of such religious excitements, by the aid of professional agitators, has been fraught with consequences the most disastrous to the Church. Machine made converts were found to have a very ephemeral life, and the successful labors of the reviver, to fill the classes of probationers, were generally followed by the more laborious and very ungrateful efforts of the regular preachers, to rid them of careless and irreligious members. Camp-meetings, too, from a variety of causes, have become very unproductive, and many of our most thoughtful preachers and members have found it necessary to discourage attendance upon them." * To this very candid confession from New York, we can add the following impartial testimony from another of the same body, the venerable Judge Hopper, of Maryland. He says, "Heretofore I have been an advocate for Camp-meetings, and the people of this circuit have generally had one once a year: but at the first quarterly meeting, which is the time this matter is generally agitated, there was not one member of the Conference, nor to my knowledge one member

* New York Christian Advocate and Journal, September, 1854.

of the Church, in favor of such a meeting. Their usefulness for religious improvement, and for the conversion of sinners, has become less and less for many years past. Where conversions have taken place, they have been ephemeral, and the effects of the meetings on the members have been 'like the morning cloud and the early dew.'" * From Virginia, another witness comes forward and says, "I think that protracted meetings have about accomplished their work in this part of the country. They have lost their interest, to a great extent, among the people. They are no better attended than the ordinary meetings, and when held in the usual way, night after night, for months together, result in a very small harvest. There is hardly enough gain, frequently, to keep the membership good in point of numbers. We have not even done this in our Conference during the past year; although there have been protracted meetings, we number three hundred and ninety-nine, less than the last year." † When we find similar testimony from almost all parts of the country—when we look at this as a modern system of human invention: when we discover its ultimate tendency is to destruction instead of edification; and that it is a mixture of great evil with comparatively little good; must we not pronounce it a feeble agency for disseminating Christianity in the nation, and furnishing religion for this Republic? yea, rather have we not seen that if adhered to, it must bring diminution, and perhaps ultimate extinction, of the religious bodies that uphold and advocate it? Do not its sad results, so humiliatingly

* Methodist Protestant, August, 1854.

† N. Y. Christian Advocate, August, 1854.

confessed, and published abroad by some of its former ardent friends, furnish a most convincing reason for adhering to divine means, the old paths, and the faith and practice of the Apostles and their more immediate followers?

One other great defect that arrests our attention in considering the denominational system, is its practical loss of the Christian nurture of the young. It is not necessary to spend time in proving that the training of the rising generation in the principles of the Gospel, is the most effectual means of establishing a people upon the foundations of religious truth, and "building them up in the faith and fear of God;" and that if the young are permitted to attain to mature years, without receiving the implanting of God's grace, and careful nurture in religious truth, there will be little hope of a general dissemination of high moral rectitude, and attractive piety. In this essential nurture and training, most of the religious bodies around us are practically deficient. Not that they have not Sunday schools for the instruction of the young; not that they do not recognize the importance of these means, and require the attendance of children upon public worship, and the preaching of the Gospel; but they do not adhere to divine directions, nor carry out that plan which originated under the Jewish dispensation, was enlarged by Christ and his apostles, and is a part of the Gospel provision for human salvation. The Baptist body, now regarded as the largest in the United States, has rejected infant baptism entirely, and never permit their children to enter into a covenant relation to their God; denying the possibility and necessity of such a contract, even by parents or guardians; and the capability of children to recieve the

divine blessing in holy baptism. Most of the other religious bodies retain in their standards this Sacrament; but in their practice, reject it to a great extent, judging from the small number baptized; its refusal to all but the children of communicants, and the infrequency with which it is made the subject of pulpit instruction. Last year, we are informed, that in seventy congregations in one New England State, and in ninety in another, there was not a single infant baptism, and in one of their oldest congregations, not one for seven years. And even those children, that are dedicated to God's service in this divine institution, are not regarded as *His* children, as being in the Ark of His church; nor addressed as being highly privileged; admitted to His covenant of promise, and the recipients of a heavenly blessing; but as still aliens and strangers, appealed to as the most godless are, and never told that they have been made children of grace. The principle that parents most generally adopt among them is, that their children should not be biased or influenced in religious things; that they should be permitted to grow up, and judge for themselves; and that mature years furnish a sufficiently early period for entering seriously upon the work of preparation for death and judgment. The consequence is, that their ministers have little hold upon the young; they find them reluctant to receive their instruction; there seems no holy bond to unite them together, and they more generally stray away, to wander from fold to fold, "carried about with every wind of doctrine;" or else they form habits of indifference; abstain from public worship, neglect the Lord's day, and become victims of popular unbelief, and sink into the grave "like the beasts that perish." That this is not mere assertion, and that these several

bodies are becoming aroused to the great neglect of Christian nurture, we have abundant testimony. Even the Baptists are endeavoring to revive a former custom of *dedicating* their children; once practiced, it is said, in Wales; whereby the minister took the child, they say in imitation of our Saviour, and dedicated it to God in the name and behalf of its parents. A committee upon Sunday Schools of a late General Conference of the Methodists, despairs of making many conversions in the older States by means of mere preaching, and says, "in such portions of our great field of labor, we must look for sound conversions more as the blessed sequence of a system of thorough religious education, than as the result of those sudden and overwhelming conversions, which characterized those times when such training was impossible."* A most candid and lamentable confession, appears in one of their largest and most wide-spread periodicals, in regard to their defective system, and the relation of baptized children to the Church. He says: "It doubtless has been a matter of the deepest regret to every lover of God and His church, to witness the sad havoc which Satan and the world have made, and are still making, among the children of God's professed people; and the question has arisen, "Is there not a cause? Is not the church herself to a great degree responsible? Does not a large amount of the blame lie against a defective economy, in not making a suitable provision for its members? What provision has the Church made for these lambs of the flock? We answer, none at all; they are admitted into the Church by the sacred rite of baptism, and then are left in their help-

* See Christian Advocate and Journal, vol. 2, page 211.

lessness to the tender mercies of the world and sin. There ought to be a distinct recognition on the part of the Church, that though they be lambs, yet they are a part of Christ's fold; and as such, are entitled to the sympathy and protection of the Church. There ought to be disciplinary regulations, making provision for the practical exhibition of this sympathy and protection. There is no time to be lost. Our children are growing up around us; they are going out from our families and Sunday Schools, by hundreds and thousands, and 'no man careth for their souls.' We repeat, something must be done, and done speedily."* We have equally candid confessions from other religious bodies, and particular allusion to that appropriate rite of confirmation, by which these same baptized children, trained in the path of duty, and instructed in the essential truths of the Gospel, are enabled to come forth and profess their faith before men, and receive an additional blessing for the more burdensome and difficult duties of life. Even Calvin, said: "I sincerely wish that we retained this custom of imposition of hands, which was practiced amongst the ancients."† Beza, Owen, and Adam Clarke, speak very much in the same way. A committee of the Presbyterian General Assembly, many years ago, in alluding to a plan of disciplining baptized children, make the following frank acknowledgment on the subject of confirmation.‡ "It appears that a rite called confirmation was administered by imposition of hands of the minister, or Bishop, or Elder, together with prayer, on

* See Banner, vol. 16, p. 77.

† See Presbyterian Clergyman Looking for the Church, p. 91.

‡ Bishop Hobart's sermon on Confirmation.

baptized children at a certain age." They quote both Calvin and Owen as authorities; and then use that emphatic passage from Hooker. "This rite of confirmation, thus administered to baptized children, when arrived to competent years, and previously instructed and prepared for it, with the express view to their admission to the Lord's Supper, shows clearly that the primitive church, in her purest days, exercised the authority of a mother over her baptized children." If then, upon their own confession, their system is thus defective; if infant baptism itself is falling into disuse, and they are obliged to acknowledge the loss of hundreds and thousands, on account of their inability to keep them within their respective folds; is their system calculated to reach the young of the nation, and thus lay the foundation for national faith and holiness? There is no longer need of argument, when such voluntary and unqualified confessions are made.

With this plain, and I believe impartial investigation of these four prominent and defective features of the denominational system, I, for the present, rest my cause. Much more might be said upon certain significant indications, such as the publishing of forms of family and private devotion;* the discussion of the propriety and

* Thus the Boston *Watchman and Reflector*, (Baptist) says:

"On all sides there are notes of discontent with the present character and effect, or alleged no-effect of public worship. A Congregational contemporary has argued for the right and propriety of some liturgical forms, to give variety and animation to the services of the sanctuary, and especially to enlist more powerfully the devout feeling of the congregation. A volume has appeared to recall Presbyterians to the fact, that so far is it from the truth that their polity is essentially inconsistent

benefit of introducing a Liturgy or Form of prayer into their public worship, the raising of committees to prepare such Forms; their return to ancient music by adopting chants, their praises of God in the language of the Psalms of David, accompanied with the solemnizing tones of the organ; their gathering together in imposing and costly gothic structures, and adoption of a variety of ancient and useful practices, which once unfortunately were made an excuse by their ancestors for leaving the Church; but we must be content to rejoice that we are thus coming together in *outward* things. Let us seek more and more for unity in spiritual things; "to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour," to "show out our works, with meekness of wisdom;" to see that "all things are done unto edifying," following that venerable and safe maxim of St. Augustine—"in essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberality; in all things, charity."

with liturgical worship, the disuse thereof is modern. The Dutch Reformed Church, in Synod assembled, has been revising her liturgy, and the discussions indicated growing interest in it.

"A Presbyterian Church, in Rochester, has adopted the name of St. Peter's, built an edifice with an eye to the suggestions of ecclesiology, and practices responsive worship. The Universalists, not to be behind their neighbors, are to have a National Convention, one object of which is to agree upon a liturgy."

In connection with the above, we give the following extract from another Baptist paper, the Louisville *Recorder:*

"Though we have (at least among Protestants) no human priest or sacrificial altar, yet among us the social element and power of the Church has become cramped, ice-bound, or entirely destroyed. We have become an assembly, not of living actors, but of silent, passive hearers. The Church has become mere listeners to preachers—a roll of names baptized, permitted to

take the Lord's Supper, and expected to enjoy good preaching. Like the door on the hinges they come and they go. They are prayed for, and sung to, and preached to; and often sung and preached to sleep, if not to death. Thus year after year, in this continuous round, dead flat, over which not a breath of emotion passes to disturb the dull and decent monotony. The minister seeks not, and the Church strives not, to 'grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.' But relying on the preacher, when he is gone, all is gone—the glory has departed.

"The evil and unscriptural character of this is being felt by all, both ministers and people. There is a deep and growing consciousness of the lack of concentrated and constant power in our usual public services. There is felt the pressing need of a change—a radical change—from our present monotonous custom of making the whole Church silent, inactive listeners, while its whole power and strength is expected to be put forth by the one man in the pulpit."

SERMON VII.

THE CHURCH SYSTEM.

1 Thessalonians v: 21.—"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

In the series of discourses, which will be brought to a close this evening, we have considered successively, the necessity of promoting a national morality and religion, inasmuch as in various senses, "we are members one of another;" the more prominent and alarming dangers to which they are exposed; the hopes of their continued preservation; the influence of the many religious bodies in the land, and especially of the Romish and denominational systems upon their general extension; while in this seventh and last discourse, your attention will be directed to that mode which the Church of our affections has prescribed for this vastly important purpose. Could we separate ourselves from the multitude—escape from the influence of vice and degeneracy—make the present the only time to awaken our interest, and religion a thing of convenience and change; these topics never would have been discussed, nor these discourses written. But when we know the truth is from God, never to be remodeled nor improved—that we are a link in a chain of generations, through, and by whom, valued trusts and

commissions, are to be handed down, and perpetuated—that the corruption and degradation of others, will overshadow and darken the cheerfulness of our prosperity, and the sunshine of our joy—and that we are united with all classes and conditions, by varied bonds and in many relations; we cannot fail to perceive that these are topics of the deepest interest; and that sooner or later we must meet them face to face, in all their reality and power; though their discussion may excite painful reflections, and develop humiliating facts. The rule followed throughout has been that of the Apostle to "prove all things," and then "hold fast that which is good." If the facts can be denied, the conclusions will be given up; but if they cannot be proven false, the conclusions must stand, though they concern a multitude. You will bear me witness that, in considering the two systems which have already passed in review; your faith was not required to rest on mere assertion, supposition, nor prejudice, when I endeavored to show that neither of them is the best mode for the preservation and promulgation of the Gospel in the land; but that the declarations, and confessions of their respective advocates, and the incontrovertible facts which their history furnished, were the testimony upon which reliance was placed. In presenting the various features of the Church system, endeavoring to show that its defects are comparatively few, and that, therefore, when used, it is *the best* mode, the effort will be made to bring evidence, equally unexceptionable, and conclusive.

Our attention is first arrested by the striking and expressive similarity between the outward organization of the Church, and the civil government under which we live. While the effort has often been made to prove that

Episcopacy is so associated with Monarchy, that it can present nothing congenial to a Republic; yet facts show that the Church more closely conforms to the civil polity than any other religious body in the land. She, like the government, is a Confederacy. Her ecclesiastical divisions, called Dioceses, are generally the several States —as the Diocese and State of Pennsylvania—Ohio—Maryland, &c.,—corresponding to the Governor is a Bishop, and to the Legislature a Convention. Again there is a Presiding Bishop, as there is a Chief Magistrate of the nation—and analagous to the two Houses of Congress, are the House of Bishops, and that of Clerical and Lay deputies, constituting the General Convention of the whole Church in these United States. In making laws, as no Governor, Upper or Lower House of the Legislature, President, Senate, or House of Representatives, can separately enact a single statute—so no Bishops, Clergymen or Laymen can pass canons; but in all cases there must be the concurrence of the three governing powers. It is a maxim of English Law,* confirmed by the farewell words of Washington—the language of President Jefferson, Chief Justice Marshall, and the Constitution of many States, that "there is no liberty where the Judicial power is not separated from the Legislative, and Executive." "The consolidation of these powers," said the Father of his Country, "whatever the form of government, is a despotism." It is a singular fact that no words could have been more fitly chosen to exhibit the great cardinal principles in the structure of of the Church; and it is still more singular that no other religious body in the land can be found thus constituted.

* See Presbyterian Clergyman Looking for the Church, p. 299.

Thus Episcopacy corresponds in this particular with the Republic, only that it is even more democratic, because while the President can veto an act of Congress, the same power can be exercised only by a majority of the Bishops. No Bishops can enact laws—no Convention can act in a judicial capacity; but the three powers are kept as distinct in the Church, as the State. But it is not so in any other religious body; and this fundamental principle, that is so strongly and reasonably urged by the brightest political luminaries of this land, as well as England, has been preserved alone as a part of the system of the Church. So, too, she commends herself to public confidence by the recognition of the rights of the Laity. In the exercise of these three necessary powers, they bear a part. They are members of our Conventions, and Standing Committees—they have a voice in the election of their Bishops and Rectors—no Ministers can be imposed upon them without their consent. They form the larger part of the Corporations that hold and appropriate the funds of the Church—so that whether in making laws—choosing their pastors—distributing the offerings of the liberal and benevolent, they are shielded against oppression and injustice—have the opportunity of securing the most efficient ministerial service, and are permitted to feel that they are not in bondage to any man—are under a government in which they *have* a representation, and are in all respects Gospel freemen. In these particulars the Church has done wisely. While conforming to the ancient model, as set forth in the first council at Jerusalem, composed of "apostles, elders and brethren," or Bishops, Presbyters and laity; she has given to all, their respective rights, and gained the great advantage of conforming to those principles of civil gov-

ernment, which commend themselves to our reason, and sense of justice. Why was one of the largest denominations* in the land, rent asunder a few years ago, but because the Laity were excluded from its government, and had no voice in its legislation, nor the choice of their pastors? And what but this same principle, and the consequent centralization of power in the mere ecclesiastic, is now agitating the Romish church, and arraying multitudes against the faith it inculcates? And is the Church system the opposite of all this? how much better suited to our people—how much more acceptable to the multitude of men—how like the earliest practice of the Christians.

We next notice the uniformity of the doctrine of the Church. Accepting the clearly established principle, that all true religion must come from God, and that "the faith was once for all delivered to to the saints," she has never adopted the opinions of any man as such; believing that Christianity can make progress only as a *divine* revelation. Consequently she has no system of Cranmerism, Ridleyism, nor Hobartism, as we hear of Socinianism, Calvinism, Lutheranism and Wesleyism; but she has the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds; the one the formulary of apostolic teaching; the other setting forth the same doctrine more fully, by the authority of a General Council of the church in A. D. 325. These Creeds have never been abolished; they have not remained a dead letter in her Standards, but always been the guides, landmarks and boundaries of her faith; upon the lips of her children, from the youngest to the oldest, from the lowest to the highest; speaking in her Liturgy; from her pulpits, in her Sacraments; at the

* The Methodist.

bedside of the sick and dying, and illuminating the pathway to the tomb. If we compare the Standards of the Church at any two given periods, since the Reformation, you find no change; but in this year of grace, 1855, we profess our faith, and offer our devotions in the same consecrated words, we use the same Ordinances and Sacraments, and "walk by the same rule, and mind the same things," as when during the early Episcopate of the venerated Bishop White, the church was hardly known beyond the precincts of the larger cities. During the entire history of the Church in this country, the Creeds and Articles have remained the same as when the first congregation met at Jamestown. And these were received from the Church in England, with the distinct declaration as found in the preface to the book of Common Prayer, "that this Church is far from intending to depart from the Church of England in any essential point of doctrine, discipline or worship; or further than local circumstances require." In that Church we find this same system continuing for the three hundred years, since she emerged from the darkness of a corrupt faith, and escaped the dominion of a foreign ecclesiastical power. Even at the Reformation, this faith was not the invention of any one man, nor body of men, but was drawn from the Word of God, as universally interpreted by the early Church during the first three centuries. If the divine revelation was completed some eighteen hundred years ago; if the divine way of salva- was then fully made known, the religion of this century must be that divine way; the faith of this day, that asks our confidence and love, must show itself that revelation; or we are not bound to receive and follow them as the prescription of Almighty God, and under the penalty of

His displeasure for their neglect. There must be a historical connection; there must be identity proven satisfactorily, or your religion will not command human homage, awe into submission, draw back alienated love, nor restore the lost to the arms of a yearning Father. Can you make a child believe that he has the memento of a dearly loved parent, who has died in a foreign land; when he knows that it is the work of the skillful artisan in an adjoining street? Does not the intelligent traveler smile at the credulity of the superstitious Italian, who thinks he gazes at a valued relic in the form of a part of the cross on which our Saviour suffered? If the parent had really left such a memento, and it had been faithfully transmitted, how truly precious it might be to the heart of a loving child; but even this happiness would be diminished in proportion to the changes it has undergone in other hands. So if there were any portion of the material instruments of our Lord's agony, it would be rightly preserved by the devout and faithful; but their satisfaction would be lessened, if it had changed its form, though made seemingly useful or beautiful. And does not a similar law hold more certainly in spiritual things? Can men ever be made to adopt, love, and follow, a system of religion, as the legacy and memento of their Lord and Saviour, who has ascended into the heavens; when they know that it is the work of the cunning spiritual craftsman? Will even the true Gospel be as much honored, and made as effectually, and constantly, the rule and guide of their lives, when they are convinced that it has been changed, and modified, in its transmission from generation to generation? When, therefore, the Church establishes the fact that she holds the doctrine of Christ, and that she has never changed the

sacred gift and token of his love; that she believes as did the Apostles and their immediate followers; and now, as of old, adheres to "Evangelical truth and Apostolic order;" when she confidently shows you her history, in these modern days of change, and so-called progress and improvements; and then points you to her one *uniform* face, reflecting the light and glory of her Lord; neither dimmed nor obscured; she may well rejoice that she had the wisdom to stand firm, as she has experienced the blessing of being "the Keeper and Witness" of divine truth.

Another great excellency of our system is the large provision that has been made for a dissemination of a knowledge of Holy Scripture. We well know that no lesson can be practiced, that has not been well learned; and we cannot expect a people to become Christian, unless we acquaint them with that inspired Word, which contains the truths and principles, whose observance is necessary to attain this important end. One of the first labors of the Reformers, therefore, was to bring the Scriptures within reach of the people; since they had been kept in ignorance for several centuries, the Bible being written in languages which they did not understand; and it had become a part of the policy of the Romish Church, to deny her children access to the Word of God. To an enlightened King in communion with the Church, and his forty-seven learned scholars, we are indebted, under God, for that version of the Scriptures, known as King James' translation; which, since 1611, when it was completed, has done more for blessing the human family, and pointing the way to true and permanent happiness, than had been accomplished in the previous thousand years. The reading of that Word in the spoken language

of the people, on all occasions of public worship, was made obligatory; and up to this hour, the church *there* and *here*, has distinguished herself as the only religious body that has made the presentation of large portions of the Scriptures prominent on all occasions of the assembling of her people. Providing as she did, not only for two Sunday, but also two daily services; directing that ten or twelve chapters should be thus read each day, and inculcating the duty of frequent private perusal of the inspired Word; her members originating the first Bible society in England and this country; except Pennsylvania, which possessed one four years earlier than our own in New York; and her sublime liturgy employing much of the language, as it is impregnated with the spirit, doctrine, and unction of the Holy Scriptures; it may well be asked, wherein has the Church failed to provide for the instruction of the people? what truth has she kept back? what opportunity left unimproved? what ignorant soul does she ever send empty away? In these respects she stands alone among all the religious bodies of Christendom. As she was the first to unlock the Word of God, and open it to the people; so she has made the amplest and most efficient provision for its general dissemination. And is not this the best mode for spreading Christianity throughout the whole land? If we believe the Bible alone can make "men wise unto salvation;" if the word of God is called in one place "the sword of the spirit,"* and in another is spoken of "as quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,"† should it not be unsheathed, revealed, and elevated, that all men may see the weapon of our warfare?

*Eph. vi: 17. †Heb. iv: 12.

Should it not be read in their hearing, as well as deposited in their dwellings; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."* No gorgeous and imposing ceremonial, no oft repeated prayers, no lengthened and impassioned discourses upon a few verses of Holy Writ, can ever accomplish the work of the Gospel; this *ceremonial*, these *prayers*, and especially this preaching, pre-suppose some acquaintance with God's Word, its facts, incidents, and events; and the Church which does most for disseminating the Scriptures, so as to reach not only the hands, but the ears, hearts and consciences of the multitude, is most effectually doing the work of her Master, and raising up true soldiers, to form new regiments, to go forth for greater conquests, and more glorious victories.

Another element for great public good is found in the unbroken uniformity of her discipline and worship. The Church recognizes, and practices but one mode for bringing men to Christ, and training them for His everlasting kingdom—all her children are brethren. They are at home in every part of our widely extended land. They may travel north or south, east or west, and they have only to cross the threshold of her sanctuaries, and they hear their household words—familiar sounds greet their ears—and the well known counsels and benedictions of their Mother in the extreme north or east, await their arrival in the extreme south or west. One system of laws—doctrine and duty—the same language of prayer and praise—the same offices for the sick and dying—the same sublime formulary to solemnize the interment of the unconscious dead, meet them on the shores of the

* Romans x: 17.

Connecticut, the Potomac, the Mississippi, and the Pacific; and they feel that they have only passed to different apartments of the same mansion, where groups of one family are congregated. Who cannot see in this admirable provision, a valuable instrumentality for the wide dissemination of a common faith, and an influential religion? When in 1850 this country was seemingly on the verge of disunion, and "men's hearts were failing them for fear," the then distinguished Senator* from South Carolina, in what proved to be his farewell speech in the Senate, drew some of his gloomiest forebodings from the fact that all the prominent Protestant bodies had been rent asunder, with *one* exception; and that was the Protestant Episcopal church, of which he was a a member—thus showing his appreciation of ecclesiastical unity in a nation; while we can now feel that the same Church is even more strongly one than then; and thus proving herself admirably fitted to carry the glad tidings of the Gospel to every part of the land, without being affected in her holy work by political questions, sectional differences, and matters of temporal, or secular policy. It is no wonder then that of the thirteen Presidents of the United States, Washington, Monroe, Madison, Harrison, Tyler and Taylor were Episcopalians. "No wonder," as one has truly said,† "that the pure hearts and polished intellects of our most brilliant statesmen, as Hamilton, Jay, Henry and many others, have so often gathered to her standard; or that in the single year of 1847, Chief Justice Spencer and Henry Clay, Chancellor Kent and Daniel Webster, did, without fear

* Calhoun's last speech. See his works.

† Looking for the Church, page 307.

of doing danger to the liberties of the Republic, bend their knees at the altar of the Episcopal church, give her their allegiance, and take the cup of salvation at her hand. The fact will bear attention that the quiet ways of the Church, her acknowledged dignity and manifest conservatism; her great principle of reverence, the negation of which is the chief danger in republican governments, and her wholesome and tried stability as a solid sea-mark amid a sea of impulses and changes; with her own interior arrangements of order, propriety and mutual restraints, constitute the *great desideratum*, meet the *great danger*, and furnish the solution to the *great problem* of Republican Liberty, and practical Democracy; while the harmony and uniformity of her worship, the beauty of her sanctuary, and the unity of her body, will bind and blend together the millions of the people." It is feared that we do not rightly estimate this conservative character of the Church—the absolute need of a controlling, balancing and guiding power in the nation; where there are conflicting interests, excited, impulsive men, ambitious and self-seeking partizans. It is not sufficient that we have energy, enterprise, wealth, increase and prosperity: but there must be an influence to direct, restrain and preserve these elements of greatness, power and glory. Every where this law and necessity are manifested. The mariner does not simply launch his majestic ship, to be driven hither and thither, at the mercy of the winds and waves; but provides his helm and compass, and governs, by the light and wisdom of a continued experience. It is not sufficient that the plant and tree, are made beautiful, and profitable, with their foliage, blossoms and fruit; but they stand upright, by means of their deep dug roots—their counterbalancing

branches—their gradually diminishing forms, as they increase in elevation. Even the massive earth was not completed, and set in motion, till it had been brought under the influence of laws, that should keep it within its sphere—continue its revolutions, and contribute to the harmony and safety of the universe of the divine Architect. There is *conservatism* in everything, and Christianity holds this relation to the nation, and the Church embodies this conservative Christianity. Do we find the civil authority disregarded, and the magistrate lightly esteemed—she enjoins reverence for duly constituted authority—and enforces with the most binding sanctions, her Master's and the Apostles' precepts. "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's"—and "to all their dues"—"fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." Are there religionists in the land, who, under the plea of zeal for God and His holy cause, interfere with questions, that are so bound up with the organization of society, that they require the utmost caution, wisdom and penetration for their discussion; and whose difficult and delicate solution, has as yet baffled the most exalted intellects of the land; behold the Church imitating the divine forbearance, keeping aloof from the arena of strife, which may end in brother contending against brother, and deluging the land in blood; and doing the appropriate work of the Lord in preaching "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." The themes of her pulpits are not the exciting topics of the legislative halls—the right or wrong of an enactment for the erection of a territory—the necessity of restraining intemperance in drink, and leaving intemperance in every thing else, to go unrebuked and unchecked: but in imitation of the inspired Teachers, she enjoins men to be

"temperate in all things"—depicts the miseries, and eternal, as well as temporal, consequences of the *bondage of sin*; and holds up before all men, to win their love—arouse their sleeping souls, and excite their lively faith, "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." When we remember the events of the last few years—and shut not our eyes upon the scenes of the present, nor our ears to the rumbling and prophetic thunderings that burden the disturbed atmosphere of our land, we may well take up the language of one who has now gone to his last resting place, who said,* "We see clouds hovering in the distance, which the wand of the statesman may not be able to disperse. We hear invectives in the North, and murmurings in the South, which a Senate may not be able to conciliate. We feel a volcano under our feet, which, if it burst, will blacken our bright Capitol to cinders. We see hands busy in designs which all Europe combined could not achieve against this fair Republic. But as the mouse, in the fable, gnawed the cable that had defied the strength of the lion; or as the despicable worm eats through the bottom of the ship at anchor, which had ridden out the wildest tempest of the sea; so may this Republic, parting its cable, at which Puritan fanaticism is at this moment gnawing, and letting in waters from causes operating in the dark, experience what the larger denominations of Christians in the land have already exemplified, the separation of the North and South. The Church will not divide; unity is her life; one Body, one Spirit. If any thing is to save this Republic it will be Christianity. If Christianity is to retain its power, it will be by its

*Looking for the Church, page 306.

unity. If unity is to be preserved it will be by the Church. And perhaps the day may come, when the church shall be recalled, as she was to England "after the sad period of the commonwealth, and Cromwell's desolations, not by the civil power, to be incorporated with it; God forbid! but "by a people weary of the endless tumults, disunions and exactions of Puritan fanaticism, to pour oil on the waves, and heal the breaches of the nation."

The church has a system of pastoral care and training, most favorable to the dissemination of the holiest influences of Christianity. She requires all, before entering her ministry, to give up their secular employments, and ordinary pursuits, and to secure a prescribed amount of literary and theological attainment. Before the laying on of the hands of the Bishop, in ordination, and their reception to the priesthood, they are solemnly and publicly exhorted, whilst standing before the altar, to have in remembrance the high dignity and weightiness of the office to which they are called—to "see that they never cease their labor, care and diligence, until they have done all that lieth in them, according to their bounden duty to bring all such as are, or shall be committed to their charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfection of age in Christ, that there be no place left among them, for error in religion, or for viciousness in life," "They are, as much as lieth in them, to apply themselves *wholly to this one thing*—and draw all their cares and studies this way,"—and to "lay aside the study of the world and the flesh."* In one word, they give themselves up, soul and body—

* Ordination office.

time, energy and strength, to the work of gathering men into the fold of Christ, and fitting them for His kingdom in heaven. No father has more entire control over his child, no master over his servant, no ruler over his subject, than the Church has over every power, faculty and talent of her clergy. They have nothing too valuable to be given up for your sakes, or appropriated for your benefit. You may command them by night or by day. *You* may flee before the pestilence to a place of healthfulness; *they* must abide at their posts, though life is suddenly sacrificed, or gradually wasted away in a service of mercy for others. *You* may curtail your business—suspend its operation for a time, and seek frequent relaxation, if it is your pleasure: *they* may not silence the voice of prayer, nor the Gospel trumpet; they may not go from their field of labor without a substitute, lest an enemy step in, or they be needed for special duty, emergency and danger. But "spending and being spent"—with an eye over every one—a member of every household—a counselor in doubt—a comforter in sorrow—a monitor in prosperity, and at all times an example to the flock, though the labor be burdensome to them, the care oppressive, and the anxiety almost too much for prolonged endurance; and who can estimate their influence for good, or measure the benefit which they bring to a land darkened by sorrow and by sin. Probably no where is this pastoral care more fully, effectually, and happily enjoyed, and realized, than in the Church of our confidence and love. There are influences in her to draw rector and people more frequently together—causes to bind them more closely—offices and relations to awaken feelings of interest and attachment—all which tend to give prominence and power to that Gospel, which should

always be preached attractively, and impressively, in the lives and characters of those, who are "the watchmen, stewards and messengers of the Lord." Their going in and out of their respective households—their social intercourse with their people—their free communications upon the varied work of the Church—the occasional counsel, caution and rebuke—their "weeping with them that weep," as well as "rejoicing with them that rejoice" —all tend to open the heart, commend the Gospel, and mould the character; so that while the faithful pastor learns the nature and necessities of his people, he awakens that confidence and affection, which are requisite to enable them to profit by his instructions, and humbly accept his admonitions.

Added to this, the Church has constantly in use a system of training, which cannot be too highly appreciated. We may have infants before reason has expanded, and responsibility commenced, and does she shut her doors against them—wait for them to advance to years of maturity, and then come and ask admission? Does she place sentinels at her gates, and exclude all who are yet without knowledge, and with unexpanded intellects? No. Her language is, "the minister of every parish shall often admonish the people that they defer not the baptism of their children, unless upon a great and reasonable cause."* She not only provides for their admission into her household, but makes it the duty of parents to bring them at the earliest possible period. Here her care and training begin. She then provides a summary of Christian doctrine and duty, called the Catechism, to be learned by every such child; the parents

* Rubric in the Baptismal office.

and sponsors are exhorted also to "see that he is taught, so soon as he is able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise and profession he has made by them—to call upon him to hear sermons; and chiefly they are to provide that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health."* Each minister also must henceforth direct his eye to that child, instructing him from year to year, and fitting him, when arrived at a suitable age, for the second ordinance of the Church—the rite of Confirmation—after which he is privileged to go forth regularly, and with the requisite dispositions, partake of the Supper of the Lord, for the continued strengthening and refreshing of his soul. During all this time the Church has her public round of services, annually presenting the prominent events of our Saviour's life, and ceaselessly holding forth the doctrines He taught, that thus this same young Christian may be instructed in Holy Scripture, and moved, by all the sacred incentives the Gospel furnishes, to diligence and faithfulness in the Christian calling. Is he sick, the Church sends her minister with her blessing and prayers, and raises her voice in the public sanctuary in his behalf. Is he about to enter, with another, into the holy bonds of matrimony, she sets forth the true character of that divine institution, and bestows her benediction, while she requires their mutual vows and pledges. Is he brought into imminent danger, by protracted or aggravated disease; she provides her consoling prayers and holy communion for himself, and a chosen few, who surround his bedside; and even at the

* Baptismal Service.

moment of departure to the world of spirits, she "commends his soul into the hands of his faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour."* When nothing remains but the inanimate dust, and sorrow and gloom fill the hearts of those who survive; she still has this in her keeping, and consigns it to the kindred earth in hopes of a joyful resurrection, in language so appropriate and comforting, and in manner so simple, yet affecting, and solemnizing, that nothing, but the warmest admiration has come from all hearts, for the Burial Office of the Episcopal Church. Thus from infancy to old age, from the cradle to the grave, she never loses sight of her children—she treats them as such—rebuking them if they go astray—calling them back with a mother's yearning tenderness, when they are far out of the way; but always ready with a blessing, if they will come and receive it, at her hands. Can we conceive a wiser or more efficient instrumentality, than this training service of the Church? equally applicable to all classes—suited to all grades of intellect, and whose very simplicity is the manifestation of consummate wisdom. Carry this out in the whole land, let it operate upon even one-half the population, and how like the voice of many waters, another generation would swell the praises of God and the Lamb; while the present is only blaspheming, and imprecating heaven's vengeance. There can be nothing effectually gained till the work is begun in childhood; and when begun, it should never be laid aside. Behold then the Church doing this very thing, and therefore every filial soul should break forth in the language of a living priest of God.

* Office for the Visitation of the Sick.

"I love the Church—the holy Church,
That o'er our life presides.
The birth, the bridal, and the grave,
And many an hour besides!

"Be mine, through life to live in Her,
And when the Lord shall call,
To die in Her, the Spouse of Christ,
The Mother of us all."*

Thus, beloved brethren, I have endeavored to present the more prominent features of the system of the Church, as being eminently calculated to spread the blessings of the Gospel throughout the land. Having directed your attention to other systems on former occasions, you will be able to estimate their comparative value. There is enough in the history of the past to show you the influence and workings of the three systems. Contrast Spain, Germany, and England, and you have the results of their experiments; and no one so ignorant as not to know which nation holds Christianity most firmly within its grasp, and is becoming more and more distinguished for its zeal in propagating the faith of Christ. While the sects are dying out in England, the Church has awoke with new life and energy. Even her enemies are looking on in wonder at her expansion, munificence, and life; and are confessing that it is the only body that is proving a blessing to the nation. If we look to our own Country, we need not be ashamed to tell her history, for it proves that she is eminently adapted to doing God's work in this enlightened land. A glance at New England, will show the Church at one time so depressed and weak, that she was the object of ridicule and contempt; and the denominational system never had a fairer field

*Cox's Christian Ballads.—I love the Church.

for manifesting its true energy and life. Within my own knowledge and recollection, a single Bishop, the humble minded Griswold, had charge of the whole New England States, with the exception of Connecticut; and now every State has its Bishop and band of clergy; while at a recent confirmation of sixty candidates, in a single parish, three-fourths of them were from without the Church. In Virginia, and Maryland, after the Revolution, the Churches were often used as shelter for the dumb brutes, the stone fonts for their watering troughs, and the sacred communion vessels, to grace the tables of the dissolute and profane. Now, three Bishops preside over those large Dioceses, and thousands have for many successive years been gathered into the fold of the Church. In all the land her ratio of increase has been almost incredible, when we consider the prejudice, misrepresentation, and varied difficulties she has had to encounter—her growth being seven-fold, when that of the population was four-fold. Therefore, it may be said of her here, as in England: "The Church has within itself a life which opposition cannot destroy. Charles, Stafford, Laud, might die upon the scaffold; Hall might be plundered till he had scarce a plate for his children to eat from, or a chair for them to sit down; Jeremy Taylor, and Nicholson, with wisdom capable of instructing, and eloquence of entrancing generations, might be driven from the pulpit to keep school for their support; many an ancient fane might become a stable; the axe, the hammer and the stone, might do their work, on the carving and blazonry of sanctuaries; but it was not by such means that the revived truth of God was to be destroyed. As soon as the blows of an enemy, that almost destroyed itself by its fury, had ceased, the aged trunk put forth a little shoot, green and delicate, so that any rude foot

might have trodden it down; and other shoots grew beside it from the same mighty root, and they became trees, and were venerable and overshadowing, and the birds of the air lodged in the branches of them; every tree having the fruit of a tree yielding seed."* So, likewise one of our own poets† has even more forcibly embodied the same idea in language as beautiful, as it is expressive.

"The Banyan of the Indian Isles,
Strikes deeply down its massive root;
And spreads its branching life abroad,
And bends to earth with scarlet fruit.
And, when the branches reach the ground,
They firmly plant themselves again:
Then rise and spread, and droop, and root,
An ever green, and endless chain.

"And so the Church of Jesus Christ,
The blessed Banyan of our God,
Fast rooted upon Zion's mount,
Has sent its sheltering arms abroad;
And every branch, that from it springs
In sacred beauty, spreading wide,
As low it bends, to bless the earth,
Still plants another by its side.

"Long as the world itself shall last,
The sacred Banyan still shall spread,
From clime to clime, from age to age,
Its sheltering shadow shall be shed;
Nations shall seek its 'pillared shade,'
Its leaves shall, for their healing, be,
The circling flood, that feeds its life,
The blood, that crimsoned Calvary."

*See Church Review, vol. 4, page 341
†Rt. Rev. G. W. Doane, D. D., LL. D.

Note.—The following forcible language is found in the same article. Church Review, vol. 4, page 346. "Three hundred years ago, 1553, Mary ascended the Throne of England, and the Reformation, it was fondly hoped by Rome, was quenched in the heart's blood of Cranmer. Another century rolled by, and Charles bent down his kingly head upon the scaffold, and the victory of Puritanism seemed complete. Again, another hundred years, and we may estimate, by what Butler and Berkeley have said, the sad condition of religion on both sides of the Atlantic. Still one more leap of a century, and we are brought to our own times—and what do we now see? Rome paralyzed at the very heart; and only supporting life in her local stronghold, (from which, when torn, she will neither have a name, nor a meaning) by the doubtful aid of Gallic bayonets; while her worship has become a gaudy display of heathenish idolatry. Puritanism, divided into countless schisms, is unable to defend itself from the heresies which it has conjured up; and changing its aspect with each coming year. But the glorious Reformed Church of England, in doctrine and in discipline, is precisely what she was when first she raised up the ensign of truth to the nations. While by the spontaneous energy of her own children, she has spread, and is spreading over the whole of this vast Northern Continent; throughout India, Australia, and the Islands of the Sea, reckoning her Bishops by scores—her Priests by thousands—and her Communicants by millions. Said the Bishop of Tennessee, in his late Jubilee Sermon in London, 'There are now congregations under the pastoral care of 2,750 clergymen, with more than fifty Bishops deriving their Episcopal character from the Church of England,' in Territories which have been occupied by the Venerable Society. The Church is now rallying around her the best hearts, and the strongest intellect on earth; and teaching everywhere, with the Bible and Prayer-Book in her hands, the same belief our Saviour taught—the apostles dissemminated— and the martyrs confirmed."

Said Bishop Hopkins in his address, before the House of Convocation, of Trinity College, Hartford, last year, after presenting the wonderful growth of the Church not only in this country, England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, (where there have been

about sixty thousand conversions from Romanism,) but also in various other parts of the world; "The sum total of the whole gives us one hundred and eight Bishops, with nearly thirty thousand clergy and assistants; a grand sacramental host, firmly united by the same faith—the same apostolic ministry—the same system of worship—and commanding, in the intelligence and social elevation of their millions of Laymen, the best and highest influence, for the religious and moral elevation of the world."

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